



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

THE  
ROMANCE  
OF A  
MAID OF  
HONOUR

BY  
RICHARD  
MARSH

2561. e. 4831.









# THE ROMANCE OF A MAID OF HONOUR

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**CURIOS  
ADA VERNHAM, ACTRESS  
MRS. MUSGRAVE AND HER HUSBAND  
MISS ARNOTT'S MARRIAGE  
THE MAGNETIC GIRL  
CONFESSIONS OF A YOUNG LADY  
THE GARDEN OF MYSTERY  
UNDER ONE FLAG**

**LONDON: JOHN LONG, Publisher**

# The Romance of a Maid of Honour

By

Richard Marsh



London

John Long

13 and 14 Norris Street, Haymarket

*All Rights Reserved*

*First Published in 1907*





# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE LADY OF THE SANDS - - - - -	7
II. AT THE OPERA - - - - -	18
III. "THAT'S FOR REMEMBRANCE" - - - - -	29
IV. IN HYDE PARK - - - - -	38
V. A YOUNG LADY FINDS A FRIEND - - - - -	50
VI. THE TELEGRAM - - - - -	60
VII. A RUBBER OR TWO - - - - -	71
VIII. IN THE SMALL HOURS - - - - -	78
IX. MR. PERKINS - - - - -	92
X. THE NEW LODGER - - - - -	103
XI. THE VASE - - - - -	117
XII. DOWNSTAIRS - - - - -	130
XIII. UPSTAIRS - - - - -	135
XIV. THE WOMAN WHO KNOCKED AT THE DOOR - - - - -	150
XV. TWO SCENES - - - - -	156
XVI. MR. BEISSMANN AND THE MARQUIS - - - - -	172
XVII. THE AMBASSADOR - - - - -	183
XVIII. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY - - - - -	194
XIX. THE BARBER'S SHOP - - - - -	202

# Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
XX. THE LADY AND THE TWO YOUNG GENTLEMEN - -	214
XXI. ON THE TOP OF THE OMNIBUS - - - -	235
XXII. THE LORD AND THE LADY - - - -	249
XXIII. TWO TELEGRAMS - - - -	264
XXIV. THE THIRD TELEGRAM - - - -	276
XXV. THE END OF HIS HOLIDAY - - - -	291
XXVI. AFTER ALL - - - -	301
XXVII. TWO VISITORS - - - -	307
XXVIII. "I WONDER" - - - -	315

# THE ROMANCE OF A MAID OF HONOUR

## CHAPTER I

### THE LADY OF THE SANDS

SCARCELY a romantic spot for a romantic meeting. Within hail of Thorpe, on the Suffolk coast, which is almost within whistling distance of Aldeburgh. A sandy waste, to which Douglas Stewart had come for a holiday in the month of May, which, that year, was the May of the poets. A dream of blue skies and pleasant airs. He had been holidaying four days, and each day had come to that sandy place to work at the book which was to bring him fame and fortune, for he was still young, and faith was in him. And each day he had been alone—until that one.

He was hard at it, at that part of the book which was to make the pulses of those who read move faster, when, on a sudden, he became aware that he was not the only creature in the neighbourhood, which was a nuisance—so he said within himself. He did not deign to look round. Sufficient was the consciousness that his solitude was disturbed. If a man could not be alone

## The Romance of a

in that wilderness at that season of the year where could he? and when? Yet that some one had been guilty of an intrusion on his privacy was certain. Some one who had approached from behind, and who—unless he was very much mistaken—had chosen a seat a yard or two from where he himself was planted. Each moment he expected to be insulted by some banal remark. He caught himself grimly wondering what form it would take. Would the intruder make some reference to the weather, or to the scenery, or would a question be asked about the time? The day before yesterday a man passing in the distance had shouted to know what o'clock it was; that was the only person he had seen during his four days' working. Perhaps the newcomer would at any rate feign an interest in the passing of the hours. Any topic would do which might serve to open a conversation. Stewart assured himself that the ruse should fail. He would talk to no one about anything.

However, the minutes passed and not a word was said. That the stranger was still in the immediate neighbourhood he was well aware. His intrusion began almost to suggest an impertinence. If he was not in search of human companionship—a craving which, in that dreary region, after all, was excusable—why had he thrust himself on the sand at his side? Did he propose to sit mumchance and spy on Stewart, while his fountain-pen made what haste it could over the blank pages of his scribbling book? As the silence continued Douglas, stung by what he was beginning to consider the other's insolence, glanced round to see what manner of person the intruder was.

It was between the end of one sentence and the

## Maid of Honour

beginning of the next, his intention being to peep, with a certain well-marked superciliousness in his air, just long enough to enable him to make a full stop. But he peeped much longer; indeed, his surprise at what he saw was so great that the peep became a stare. What he had anticipated he could not have said, but it certainly was not this. The intruder was feminine; for some reason he had confidently expected to find a man; the discovery of the person's sex was in itself of the nature of a shock. And then the stranger was young and beautiful and charming—all that there was of the most delightful; with a rapidity of perception which did him credit Mr. Stewart was convinced of that upon the instant. He was convinced also of something else. His acquaintance with women was not large compared with some men's, still he had encountered several of different varieties. He was quite certain that he had never before met one who in any way resembled the stranger who was sitting on the sand. His instinct told him that this was a young woman who moved in a different world from his. She was simply dressed, though something hinted to him that her simplicity might have cost more than some other women's splendours. She assumed no airs of a great lady; she was affability itself. She met his glances with laughter in her eyes. He had not looked at her half a dozen seconds before she nodded. Then he took his cap off. And presently they were talking.

He did no more work that day. They talked and talked. Though what about he could not have laid his hand upon his heart and sworn. Like two children, just for the sake of talking. It was the strangest day he had ever spent. And when they parted she went



## The Romance of a

her way, inland, and he returned to the little cottage, in which he had a room, at Thorpe. The next day she came again, about the same time. There had been no promise, expressed or implied, that she would come. Yet, so soon as he returned to the place where she had been, he felt that her presence filled all the air; so that when, materialising, she came towards him across the sand, he knew that he had been waiting for her all the while. And again they talked and talked, and were perfectly happy. That was the oddest part—that they should have been pleased with such little things. And so it was the next day and the next; she came again, and again, and again. Not that on those following days they confined themselves to conversation; she began to show him things. Having learnt how ignorant he was of essentials she embarked on a course of instruction, commencing with golf. It seemed incredible to her—she told him frankly—that he could only have come across a golf club in a shop window. She had not supposed that any one's education could have been so neglected, so she took his ignorance in hand. She brought, in a bag, a wooden driver, an iron driver, a cleek, a putter and four balls. She began with the very rudiments, striving to teach him how to stand and to address the ball, in proper fashion, off the tee. He was an awkward, though a most willing, pupil. When he had attained a degree of proficiency in which he might be relied upon not to fizzle more than three shots out of four, they dug out seven holes in the sand, and on those primitive links they played a series of matches. They were wonderful games. The girl played as to the manner born; her skill was to him a continual cause of amazement; he never won. And how she laughed

## Maid of Honour

at him, and with how light a heart he joined her in her laughter.

One morning she came with a gun in either hand ; one was a rook rifle, the other a light sporting gun. She taught him how to shoot, or, at least, she tried. That was funnier even than the golf. She hit everything, he nothing. There was something about him which prevented him taking an accurate aim ; he would miss the foot-square board which formed their target at a distance of less than fifty yards ; she would get inside a three-inch ring at twice the distance. His incapacity troubled her. When she found that, in spite of all her pains, it remained as great as ever, she would take him seriously to task. There ensued grave discussions as to what might be the possible cause of his deficiency, discussions which were as unending as they were engrossing ; it was extraordinary how many other topics would crop up in them ere they were finished.

And so ten never-to-be-forgotten days went by. On each of them they met, and were for hours alone together on the sands. Sometimes he brought lunch, and sometimes she, such lunches as they were ; and they ate together, and drank together, and talked together, and played together. All the while they never saw a soul except themselves. The weather continued to be all that a man and a maid might desire ; the whole business was in keeping with a poet's May. Not once did either make an appointment for the morrow, nor was any word said which might be interpreted as a promise that they would ever meet again. Yet when the morning came they both were there. Until a black and bitter Friday, which was all the blacker and bitterer because the skies were blue, and the sun was warm, and

## The Romance of a

the air was soft. He started from Thorpe light of heart and happy. Although his fortnight's holiday was up he told himself that a few days more or less would make no difference, though he very well knew they would. If he returned on Sunday night, or the first thing on Monday morning, it would serve; though he was perfectly aware that there would be chaos in the offices of that well-known publication, *The Family Hearth*, in consequence of his continued absence. But he had not told her he was going. Of course it would be extremely discourteous to go without preparing her mind for his departure. It was true that he had meant, more than once, to warn her that his time for dallying was nearly over. Somehow, something always had prevented him, he himself knew scarcely what. To-day, however, she should be told, gently, not brusquely; by degrees, as it were. For instance, he might hint that, soon, he must away. If she pressed him for particulars he might name Sunday. If she deemed the notice short he might make it Monday; at the back of his mind he was wondering if, at a pinch, he dare to make it Tuesday. Anyhow, what had to be would have to be; and that Friday he started off to tell her so. But she never came to be told.

When it was her usual time for coming he stood up, as was his custom, to greet her afar off. So far as he knew she came from across the fields, Saxmundham way. The first glimpse he would get of her would be as she came through a gate into a field of mangel. When she came through the gate she would pause for a moment, looking up towards the sands, which were a little above her. When she saw him, waving his cap, she would wave her hands with whatever she had in

## Maid of Honour

them. Then he would stand still and watch her as she came ; he liked to stand and watch her. It was only when she was quite close that he would advance to greet her, though it hardly could be called a greeting, since, without preamble, they always plunged at once into the middle of things. There was no shaking of hands ; their hands had never touched each other ; their intercourse had been delightfully informal.

He thought it delightful until that morning. Then, when he stood, and looked, and looked, and looked, and still she did not come, there came into his head an as yet dim doubt as to whether the informality had been so very delightful after all. When an hour passed and there were still no signs of her he did what he had never done before—he crossed that mangel field, and, passing through the gate, looked down the lane along which it had been her wont to come ; at least, he supposed it had been her wont, because, although he had never actually seen her, so far as he could judge there was no other way she could have come. He did more, he went down the lane to the bend, and round the bend, till he came to four cross-roads, when he was brought to a standstill. Along which of those four roads it had been her habit to come he had not the dimmest notion ; all he knew was that, from the crossing, she was not to be seen on either of the four. He hung about those cross-roads for nearly an hour ; passing to the bend in the lane, thence to the mangel field, and back again ; looking, looking, and waiting ; but she never came. Then he returned to his place on the sands, and there he waited, and watched, for the rest of the day, in vain. Nothing happened to show that she had ever been. When he returned to his cottage at Thorpe

## The Romance of a

he believed himself to be the saddest man in England.

He had learned two things since the morning. The one, what the Lady of the Sands, for so he had begun to call her in his thoughts, had grown to mean to him in ten days. The other, that the informality of their intercourse, which he had esteemed so delightful, might turn out to be a tragedy—for him. He perceived, too late, that the informality had been carried too far. For example, they had never addressed each other by name. It seemed absurd, but he had no idea what her name was, nor, so far as he was aware, did she know his. When he came to think of it, it was with a sense of shock that he realised that he knew absolutely nothing about her. He did not understand exactly how it had come about, but, somehow, their conversation had always been on impersonal themes. Certainly nothing had transpired which could convey to him the slightest hint as to who she was; whence, each morning, she came; whither, each afternoon, she returned. For all the data he had to go upon, to prove the contrary, she might have been materialised, each morning, at that gate leading into the mangel field, and, at the same spot, might have been dissolved again, each afternoon, into vapour. Suppose she did not return to-morrow, or the next day, or at all; then not only was he totally without means of communicating with her, or she with him, but he had nothing which would enable him to establish her identity; to all intents and purposes she might actually have dissolved into vapour, like the end of a dream.

A dream? If, he told himself, the Lady of the Sands was thenceforward to be nothing but a dream that was past, then the light had gone out of the world



## Maid of Honour

for him, and that holiday of his would mean the end of all things.

Fearful of so dire a tragedy he made inquiries of the people of the house. Did they know her? what her name was? whence she came? Did they know anything about her which would enable him to find out something for himself? It seemed that no one did, not only in his own house, but no one in either of the three or four cottages which constituted Thorpe. She had been observed—oh, yes, with him. The observers had taken it for granted, since she was so constantly alone with Mr. Stewart, that she was an old friend. The suggestion which his inquiries conveyed that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, to him she was an entire stranger seemed to tickle the aborigines in a fashion he did not relish. They looked at each other, and they looked at him; it was not only his fancy that there was something in their looks which was not altogether nice. Obviously it would need but little for them to draw conclusions which would be flattering neither to the lady nor to him. Rather than they should do that he preferred to ask no further questions. So all night, sleeping and waking, he dreamed of her, and wondered.

The next morning, early, he was at the trysting-place. Perhaps since she did not come yesterday she might take time by the forelock, and, to prove her penitence, appear betimes. The day was such a fair one it drove away his doubts and fears; at least, almost. He laughed to think that he had fancied she had gone for ever, and left him so placed that he could not even call upon her name; but in his laughter there was, as one might describe it, the haunting of a shadow. He

## The Romance of a

vowed that, at once on her arrival, he would demand of her her name, and, if necessary, with apologies, on his knees, would beg that she would give him some address where communications would always find her. When she had heard him tell, in the most picturesque language at his command, of the peril he had escaped of never knowing who she was, or where she might be found, surely she would be moved to pity, and shower on him all the information he desired, and perhaps a little more. It was on that little more his imagination rested; what was the especial little more with which he most hoped that she would favour him? He scarcely dared to think.

And yet he thought, and thought, and thought; so that his thoughts were daydreams, flecked with a radiance which was greater than that of the sun. So pleasant were those daydreams that he paid no heed to the flight of time, until, all at once, he woke and found how much of it had gone. Then, on the instant, his dreams had fled, and the whole pestilent batch of doubts and fears came back to him instead. For, certainly, though it was past her proper hour, still she had not come. He sprang to his feet, and gazed across the mangel field, to be rewarded only by the landscape. He strode to the gate, along the lane, again to those confusing four cross-roads; if he had only had some faint inkling as to the one she had been wont to honour, it would have been something. He might at least have trod it for himself, until he reached some place from which she might have come, and there he might have had courage enough, on some excuse, to make inquiries, which might have resulted in bringing him face to face with her. As matters lay nothing

## Maid of Honour

could be done but wait—in vain—which was what he did do, until the going down of the sun.

On the Sunday he might have pleaded conscientious objections to Sunday travelling, which prevented his return to town ; if he had them, they did not keep him from watching from dawn till eve for the lady who never came. But he could plead nothing which should have kept him from hurrying to town upon the Monday, yet he never seemed to entertain the idea of going, even for a single moment. Nor yet again upon the morrow. Not until the Friday did he leave that place, a week after his holiday, by right, was over. And not one line had he sent to the office to explain his absence, and that although the only thing he did the livelong day was wait and watch—always in vain—for the Lady of the Sands.

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER II

### AT THE OPERA

THERE was friction at the offices of *The Family Hearth* when at last Mr. Douglas Stewart condescended to return—"condescended" was the word used by the proprietor. It was a fixed belief of his that all persons who wrote were more or less insane. Had Mr. Stewart endeavoured to set forth the reasons which had kept him at Thorpe, Mr. Wrangham—Wrangham was the proprietor's name—would have hugged his conviction closer than ever. But Mr. Stewart endeavoured to do nothing of the kind. His holiday seemed to have done him little good—either to his health or to his temper. The latter appeared to have been positively injured. Ordinarily he would have suffered Mr. Wrangham to make a few remarks, in a certain strain, and have endured them in peace. On that occasion, however, he practically declined to allow the injured proprietor to even open his mouth. So soon, at any rate, as a remark came out of it, he retorted with another, of a kind which caused Mr. Wrangham to stare with something more than surprise. Whereupon

## Maid of Honour

there ensued a brief interchange of warm, and somewhat personal, observations, in consequence of which, in a very few minutes, the connection between Mr. Douglas Stewart and *The Family Hearth* was entirely severed. Within about a quarter of an hour of his return to the office he marched out of it again, as he told himself, for ever, and turned into Fleet Street with the feeling strong upon him that, in a fit of childish bad temper, he had thrown away a position which meant to him a good deal more than bread and butter.

And so he became that curious thing which is known in scribblers' slang as a "free lance"; that is, he worked and worked, and offered his work here, there and everywhere, in the hope that somewhere it might find acceptance. Not a very exhilarating occupation. And continually there came between his work and him the face of the Lady of the Sands. She had cost him something already; it seemed likely that before all was done she would cost him more. A man cannot concentrate all the best that is in him, and put it into his work, to the exclusion of all else, if he is haunted; and this man was. Night and day she looked at him and laughed, and her voice sounded in his ears; yet when he sought her she was gone, like a will-o'-the-wisp. He followed her, a very will-o'-the-wisp, into perilous places. People wondered what had happened to Stewart, that he had gone all to pieces all of a sudden. And things began to be pretty bad with him.

Then, one afternoon, when things were still worse, he almost cannoned against her at the corner of Down Street. That was an afternoon at the end of June. He had been trying to get some money from an editor who had promised to use a manuscript, and was re-



## The Romance of a

turning, empty-handed, to his rooms at Walham Green, walking all the way to save a 'bus-fare. Even a 'bus-fare had become a matter worthy of consideration. Passing Green Park, absorbed in his own thoughts, which were not pleasant ones, all at once he nearly came into violent collision with a lady who came quickly round the corner of a street. Had each not put out a steadying hand there might have been an awkward scene. Glancing up, hat in hand, apologies upon his lips, he found himself confronted by the Lady of the Sands. But such a vision was she of fashion's splendour that, for half an instant, he did not know her. When recognition came his senses went. He had always felt she was the most beautiful thing on earth. But in that hat and frock, with all those insidious adjuncts which are meant for man's undoing—in his wildest dreams he had not supposed she was so beautiful as this and so transcendently above him. There was the pinch. For on the spot he recognised how poor and insignificant a thing he must be in the eyes of this great lady. He had been suspicious of her greatness from the first; now the force of it overwhelmed him. And that although she held out her hand to him, and he felt her small-gloved palm in his great bare one, for he chanced to be carrying his gloves for reasons of economy. She smiled at him quite sweetly, the smile he knew so well; that had not changed a bit; and she said very pleasantly:—

“How are you? It seems so odd to meet you here.”

He stammered something, what, he never knew; because, before he had finished stammering, a tall, well-groomed man, of her own class, came up to her

## Maid of Honour

and said, with the lack of ceremony of the familiar friend :—

“Come along ; we shall have to put the steam on—we’re late already”.

They put the steam on, marching off together side by side in the direction Stewart had come from. Her companion ignored him altogether, but she, as she was wheeled away, nodded and smiled with the daintiest grace. And Mr. Stewart was left to pursue his homeward road in a waking vision.

He knew not if he was glad or sorry to have met her. Of course to have seen her was something ; nay, it was much ; his tingling pulses told how much. But then the encounter had only served to show him what a great gulf there was between them, how they inhabited different worlds. There was no passage from his to hers. That was a dreadful thought ; there was no way round it. Then, although her manner had been charming, he was not at all sure that there had not been something in it which savoured of condescension. And her words ; no doubt she had felt it odd that she should meet him there, yet she need not have put it quite so plainly, because, after all, he had as much right to be in Piccadilly as she had, even in broad daylight, in the month of June. As regards her companion, the male person who had hustled her so unceremoniously away ; he desired to think no ill of any one, especially of a friend of hers, but, at the same time, he was himself a man, and as a man he could not but feel that he should like to address a few well-chosen remarks to that unknown male person on the subject of the etiquette which should be observed by man towards man ; in short, he was prepared to

## The Romance of a

tell him that he did not propose to allow himself to be trampled on by any one, be he peer or peasant.

This being the mood in which he returned to his rooms it was obvious that he had derived no particular benefit from the encounter. He sat down and straightway wrote a four-thousand-word story of the most morbid and pessimistic kind. Having been refused by half the editors in town it ultimately came to nothing, which was unfortunate. It is hard upon a man if he cannot make a market out of his sorrows.

About a fortnight afterwards an acquaintance, who was the musical critic of a paper of no very great importance, asked Mr. Stewart to take his place at the opera, and write some sort of notice of the performance. Mr. Stewart was sick of his own society; indeed, he was sick of everything; an evening at the opera was better than nothing; so he agreed. When he reached Covent Garden he learned that the king and queen were to be present, a piece of news which had no interest for him. Like everything else, royalty was as dust and ashes. The opera was "*La Bohème*," which he had never seen before. The second act was well commenced when something in the air of the house made him conscious that the royal party had entered. Not that he paid any attention to the fact; he ignored it utterly. The private reflection he made to himself was to the effect that it was a piece of bad manners on the part of any one to arrive in the middle of a piece. He had observed that the greater part of the stalls and boxes had only just filled up. He asked himself, with caustic irony, if it would not be as well that a king should set an example to his subjects.

However, when the act was finished he did deign

## Maid of Honour

to examine the house through his glasses, and even to allow them to rest for a moment on the royal box. The paper for which he was acting was not of sufficient importance to entitle its representative to a stall. He was in the circle, on one side, so that from where he sat he had an excellent view of the royal box and of its occupants. Just as his eyes reached it the king was standing up, and was withdrawing, with other gentlemen, probably to an anteroom without. None but ladies were left behind. There were five of them. One was unmistakably the queen; another was one of the princesses; two were elderly ladies whom he could not place; and the fifth—at the sight of her the glasses almost dropped from his fingers, for the fifth was the Lady of the Sands. His surprise and bewilderment were so great that for some seconds he was in the curious position of believing that his eyes must be playing him some trick. Lowering the glasses, he closed his eyes as if to shut out some strange and dazzling object. When he reopened them, he directed them, unaided, towards the royal party. There was no mistake about it. His eyes had not tricked him. It required no glass to show him that. The person at whom he gazed was undoubtedly the Lady of the Sands. She sat just behind the queen, but was leaning forward, so that, her head coming between the queen and the princess, for the moment hers was the most prominent figure in the box. Her Majesty was addressing to her some apparently jocular remarks, for she was smiling as she listened, as if in the enjoyment of some excellent joke. As he observed her, Douglas Stewart recalled the smile with which she used to reward him when he fozzled, even beyond

## The Romance of a

the ordinary, a shot at golf. It seemed incredible that this girl, who, in that brilliant scene, was evidently on terms of familiar intercourse with the sovereign, could be the girl who had endeavoured her utmost to teach him how to address a ball on the sandy wastes at Thorpe. Yet, could he be mistaken? No, that was not possible. Something which raged and stormed within him made that quite clear.

She was certainly the most beautiful creature in the house. It was not only his partial glance which crowned her queen of beauty. He heard the people at his side say to each other what a lovely girl she was to whom the queen was talking, and how in her bearing there was such an exquisite air of grace and of distinction. He remembered how he had been struck by it when he first had seen her on the sands, and how the influence of it had been with him through those ten days of paradise. It moved him more than ever then, as he sat there trembling in his seat. For he did tremble; with such foolish persistence that he feared his weakness would be noticed by his neighbours. But it seemed that they were too much occupied with other matters to notice him.

He did not know whether to go or stay. Where he was he was divided between ecstasy and pain. He was conscious of an almost delirious sense of happiness at being within sight of her. It was absurd, yet true. To look at her, to know that she was there for him to look at whenever he chose, was bliss. Each time he looked the house seemed to swim about him; its material substance melted, he was in an empyrean of his own, whose air, as he inhaled it in his lungs, had in it the property of sublime intoxication; he was like a

## Maid of Honour

man who was beside himself. Yet while he revelled in this delight of the senses he knew how vain a thing it was and how unreal. This girl, whose mere presence stole from him the better portion of his wits, was as indifferent to him as if he had been a block of stone, and she ever would be. She was oblivious of his existence and would remain so. It was true that she had condescended once to speak to him, but he perceived now, only too clearly, that the very manner of her condescension showed the point of view from which she had regarded him. Being in a mischievous mood, with, at the moment, no other occupation, she had treated him as if he were some inanimate, though amusing, plaything, with which it was possible to while away some idle hours. The hours having passed, the plaything passed with them, and so an end. So far as he was concerned, he was as wholly relegated to oblivion as if he had been some broken toy, which she had dropped in some odd corner, and forgotten, and intended to continue to forget. What had he, the penniless slave of a scribbler's pen, in common with a radiant vision of girlish grace and beauty, whom even her sovereign delighted to honour? The question was too absurd to require a serious reply. For all he knew the girl was herself of royal blood. Was it not ridiculous that he should even dare to dream of her?

There were sounds from the orchestra. People were returning to their places. The next act was about to commence. He all at once became conscious that it would be agony for him to sit it through. He might make an idiot of himself if he were to try. To the surprise, probably, of those about him, since he had given no sign of movement hitherto, just as the curtain

## The Romance of a

was about to rise, getting on to his feet he made the best of his way through the returning members of the audience towards the door. On the other side of it he met Lewis Stiebel, who acted, in musical matters, for *The Daily Telephone*. Him he accosted.

"Stiebel, can you tell me who that girl is in the royal box?"

"Girl?—what girl? My dear chap, I know nothing about any girl, or about the royal box either. You mustn't come to me for society news. It's a subject on which I'm the most ignorant man alive. The only thing I pretend to know anything about is what happens on the stage."

He slipped past Douglas before that young gentleman had a chance of speaking again. A little farther on Mr. Stewart met Arthur Melville, who wrote on musical matters for no end of papers. To him he addressed the same inquiry, and received the same response, with characteristic additions. Mr. Melville spoke as he wrote—in the florid manner.

"My dear Stewart, I won't pretend not to know what girl you mean, because, so far as I've been able to perceive, there's only one girl in the house worth noticing, and as she's in the royal box there can't be any doubt about it. But when you ask me who she is, you get into the depths, because I don't know. Perhaps it's well for her, and well for me, that I don't. If I did I might be tempted to address her in terms which would be meant to move her heart. And if they moved it I should forget the present Mrs. Melville, and my family of seven children, and the unpaid rent and rates and taxes, and I should fly with her, wherever she would fly to. So you will clearly perceive,

# Maid of Honour

Stewart, that for me not to know her is the path of safety."

Mr. Stewart put his question to still a third person, and this time it was answered. The better informed person was that well-known character, Mr. Dasey Daintree, who does a little of many things and not much of anything. He regarded his questioner with benevolent surprise.

"You don't mean to say, Stewart, that you don't know who that girl is? She's the reigning toast."

"I've not a doubt of it; but that doesn't tell me who she is."

"She's the most lovely girl who has appeared in town for I don't care to think how many seasons; and I ought to know. Few men have seen more of the beautiful women who have figured in society in my time than I have."

"I can believe it easily. I asked you who she was."

"You are of course aware that she is one of the maids of honour."

"Is she? I didn't know it."

Mr. Stewart's heart sank. A maid of honour! And he was in doubt as to where funds were to come from to carry him to the end of the present quarter, to say nothing of what was beyond.

"In what other capacity did you suppose she occupied a seat in the royal box? That girl, Stewart, is one of the queen's maids of honour—the very latest acquisition; the youngest, and far away the fairest. She's only just attached. She's the Honourable Diana Alys Gwendolen Chiltern, and she's related to half the peerage; that part of it to which she is not related doesn't count. I could tell you tales about her people



## The Romance of a

for a week on end, and then leave off in the middle, and I might throw in an anecdote or two about her, for I have been given to understand that already some stories are being borne on the breeze. Luckily for you I have to be back in my stall inside two seconds, or I might buttonhole you like the Ancient Mariner; but I may mention that there is no man living who would not be honoured if she stood beside him at the altar, and I have heard that at least one reigning king showed more than symptoms of a desire to make her his wife—only, to speak of nothing else, the laws of his country were against him. So you see, although we're both of us bachelors, there's not likely to be much chance for either of us."

Mr. Daintree went off with a laugh as if he had been guilty of a joke. He had no idea of how bad a joke it seemed to the man he had left behind, or with what sensations Douglas Stewart was thinking of the girl with whom he had played—was it in fairyland in ages past? or was it only the other day upon the sands at Thorpe?

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER III

### "THAT'S FOR REMEMBRANCE"

DOUGLAS STEWART did not return to his seat in the circle to see any more of "La Bohème"; that, at the moment, was beyond his capacity. When Mr. Daintree quitted him he went straight down the staircase and out of the building. As he stood putting on his coat in the entrance hall a tall, dark man came brushing past him. He had a clean-shaven face and there was something in his bearing which gave him an air of the unusual. He muttered an apology to Stewart for having touched him as he passed. As he approached the great swing doors which opened on to the street a woman, who had been sitting on a chair, rose and confronted him. What she said Stewart could not distinguish, but from the manner in which the man regarded her he felt sure that her presence was unwelcome. Without uttering a word, or removing his hat in recognition of her greeting, the man put his hand upon her arm and half drew, half led her out with him into the street. When presently Stewart followed, strolling up Bow Street, he turned into Long Acre. So soon as he did

## The Romance of a

so he became aware that only a few yards in front of him were the man and the woman who, a few moments before, had departed together. They were standing still and were addressing each other in tones which hardly suggested that they were on the best of terms; Stewart heard the tones, if he could not hear the words. Suddenly the man raised his arm, brought it down quickly towards the woman, and the woman fell. It was all done in a moment, but in that moment Stewart was conscious that the man had a glittering something in his hand with which he struck the woman down. The moment he had done so the man, wheeling round, moved quickly forward, turned into James Street and vanished out of sight, before Stewart, whose thoughts were elsewhere, had a chance to open his lips and shout out, "Stop him!"

When he was roused to a clear consciousness of what had happened, hastening towards the recumbent figure of the woman on the pavement he leant over her. She lay quite still, ominously still; he spoke to her, she did not answer; plainly serious mischief had been done. Glancing about him he perceived that, as luck would have it, fortune had favoured the assailant; at the instant no one was within actual hail. There were some people in the distance; a cab was coming towards him, but while he waited the criminal escaped. It seemed to him, his wits being even yet a trifle fogged, that the first thing necessary was to catch the criminal. He essayed to do it. Dashing off at full speed he, too, turned into James Street, and, as he did so, saw, or thought he saw, a flying figure at the extreme end turning into Covent Garden. It was only a glimpse he caught at best; in the uncertain light it was impossible

## Maid of Honour

for him to be certain that it was the figure of his man ; but, as if he felt that this was a case in which consideration was the thief of time, he rushed headlong after it. Only to find, when he reached the market, that there was no one in sight who was in the least like the individual he was seeking. People there were, and three of them he questioned. Their responses seemed to make it clear that he had been hasty in taking things for granted, and that the figure he thought he had seen did not belong to the person he was chasing.

The discovery confused him, which was unnecessary, since he was confused enough already. He stood for some seconds in doubt as to what he ought to do, glancing about him as if he felt that by some accident he might have overlooked the man whom he was after. Suddenly recalling the woman on the pavement, realising that—to speak of nothing else—his evidence might be of the first importance, he hastened back to where she lay to find that she had gone. That was a shock indeed. Had there been anything to show that, during his absence, some person or persons had appeared upon the scene and borne her off that would have been something. There was the police station round the corner ; a policeman might have found her ; but in that event there certainly would have been proof of the fact and to spare. But there was nothing, absolutely nothing, to show that a woman had ever lain on the pavement in the immediate neighbourhood of the spot on which he himself was standing. He felt bewildered. A man approached him coming from Bow Street. He spoke to him.

“Excuse me, but have you heard anything of the woman I just now left lying on the pavement?”

## The Romance of a

Apparently the man also had come from the opera. He was young, in evening dress, and he put up an eyeglass to survey Mr. Stewart in a manner which that gentleman became immediately aware was scarcely flattering.

"I beg your pardon?"

Conscious that in the eyes of the stranger he was making an ass of himself, Stewart stammered out what he meant for an explanation.

"The fact is that I saw a man knock down a woman with what I believe was a knife, and when I ran after him I left her lying here, and then when I couldn't catch him I found that she was gone. I wondered if you had heard anything about it."

The stranger gravely shook his head.

"Wrong address. Try another."

That was the only remark he made, and he strolled on. Stewart wondered what kind of creature he was, and what he meant; it was borne in upon him that he would like to knock him down. However, it seemed plain that he had exaggerated the importance of the affair. Evidently while he was running after the man the woman had picked herself up and departed. In any case it was no business of his. Since he did not desire to subject himself to further impertinence from idiots with eyeglasses or from anybody else, he resolved to trouble himself no more about the matter. Going down to the Strand he climbed to the top of a 'bus which was bound for Walham Green. And as he went the clean-shaven face of the man who had brushed against him as he passed went with him. He had hardly noticed the woman, but, in some half-unconscious fashion, it seemed that he had particularly ob-

## Maid of Honour

served the man. He kept saying to himself, as the horse-drawn 'bus went lumbering on, that he was not the kind of man with whom, under certain circumstances, one would care to have a serious difference of opinion.

When he reached his rooms he took from his shelves a three or four-year-old Whitaker's Peerage. Turning up the name "Chiltern" he found that it occupied more than three columns of small and closely printed type. In view of its evident importance it was a demonstration of his ignorance that he had never heard of it before. He learned that the Honourable Diana Alys Gwendolen Chiltern was the only daughter of Augustus Seymour Sinclair Chiltern, Baron Roffey. Her father was the ninth baron. He was a widower; his wife had been the youngest daughter of the Duke of Horsham. Besides his daughter he had one son, who was heir to the title. The tell-tale book showed that the young lady was nineteen years of age, while her brother, the Honourable Arthur Seymour Sinclair Chiltern, was seven years her senior. At the time the book had gone to press he was unmarried, and an officer of the Royal Horse Guards—the Blues. Whitaker made it plain that Miss Chiltern had a large number of relatives, all, apparently, of the extremest eminence.

In short, to his entire dissatisfaction, Mr. Stewart perceived that this young lady was born in the purple; that all those things which the heart can desire were hers; that she was as high above him as the stars are above the earth. On which account he wished, among other trifles, that he had never been born; that he had never been to Thorpe; that he had never met her; that she had never dared to look at or speak to him; that

## The Romance of a

something might happen which would compel her to beg her bread in the streets ; in which case, should he become the master of millions—as worse men than he had done ! —he would woo her, and wed her, and raise her to a pinnacle of greatness compared to which her former greatness should be as nothing. Considering which matters necessitated his smoking pipe after pipe far into the night, so that when he did rise from his unduly slighted bed it was with an up-all-night feeling, and a strong disrelish for breakfast, which filled his landlady, who was the tenderest soul and used to the peculiarities of youth, with some concern, it being an axiom of hers that when a young man, say in the early twenties, could not eat his breakfast then there was something wrong. Mr. Stewart had just decided that it was useless for him to persist in his attempts to work, since all the sense had departed from him, and left him an empty husk, when the midday post brought him a letter.

It was rather an odd-shaped envelope—at least, it seemed odd to him, and was addressed in a bold, open, dashing hand :—

“ Douglas Stewart, Esq.,  
13 Brenda Villas,  
Walham Green ”.

He eyed it for a moment or two, endeavouring to recall the hand ; when he had decided that it was strange to him he opened it. It contained half a sheet of paper, in which was a small sprig of some plant, which had rather a pungent smell. Botany was not one of his strong points ; what plant it was he had not a notion. He turned for an explanation to the half sheet of paper. At the top of it was written, in the same free-running

# Maid of Honour

hand, one word—Thorpe. In the centre of the page, in inverted commas, were Ophelia's words:—

“Rosemary, that's for remembrance”.

There was nothing else upon the page. What did it mean? He stared at it, puzzled. Then a ray of light came to him. Could it be—was it possible—was it conceivable—that some miracle had happened, and that this was from her? Wild though such a supposition was, almost beyond credibility, yet from whom else could it have come? Thorpe! To whom could the name of that queer hamlet convey any meaning, except to her? And Ophelia's words! Rosemary?—was this queer smelling thing a sprig of rosemary? Had she sent it to him in remembrance—of what? of Thorpe? of her?

Something had happened to the room; it was moving round him. He sat down on a chair trembling. What did it mean—this miracle, if it was indeed a miracle? That she had not forgotten him?—that she did not wish him to forget her?—that she had taken this means of giving him to understand? Then in that case that envelope was pregnant with a meaning which a big book could not have expressed with equal eloquence. But how had she learnt his name, his address? After all, that would not be difficult, if—that great if!—if she wanted to. She might have learnt it at his headquarters; any one would have told her at Thorpe. Then he had a habit of leaving papers, letters, about, anywhere, anyhow. He remembered her picking up an envelope which he had dropped on the sands to wipe a golf ball with it. It bore his name and address; she might have seen it. Oh, it would have been much



## The Romance of a

easier for her to find out about him, than it had been for him to find out about her, had she chosen.

He examined the envelope which had just arrived. It had been post-marked on the previous day at midnight. At midnight? Could she have scribbled a line and posted it immediately on leaving the royal box? Did that not suggest that she might have seen him in the theatre although he had not been aware of it, and that the sight of him had filled her with such emotion that she had felt impelled to send him, then and there, a sprig of rosemary for remembrance? What portentous significance might such an action have! What golden possibilities it pointed to! It might mean for him the opening of the very gates of heaven. He kissed the sprig of rosemary; he kissed the envelope; he kissed the sheet of paper, and each separate word that she had written on it, and in doing so discovered that there was something on the other side of it which, but for his rapturous ardour, he might have overlooked.

Across a corner was written this, "Achilles Statue, 5.30". What fresh wonder was there here? Achilles Statue?—that was in Hyde Park. Of course, he knew it well. Five-thirty?—that might mean this afternoon. He had little actual experience of the ways of fashion, but he had heard that that was the hour at which Hyde Park was full of the greatest folks in town. Did that enigmatic sentence imply that she would be in Hyde Park near the Achilles Statue at 5.30 and that she would be on the look-out for him?

He jumped off the chair on to his feet. In that case she should not look in vain. He had a frock-coat somewhere; he would have his silk hat ironed; he would buy a new pair of gloves—his present pair was

## Maid of Honour

in a shocking state—and a tie more in the mode, if he had to spend his substance on these things. And he would show himself in the Park with the rest of the world. And though she had a duke on one side of her and a marquis on the other she should not fail to see that he was there, if for no other reason than because he would wear in his buttonhole that cutting from the herb of memory, that sprig of rosemary. If necessary he would point to it with his finger and say to her, "That's for remembrance".

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER IV

### IN HYDE PARK

MR. STEWART was early. It was a quarter past four as he went through Hyde Park Gate. He had intended to be in good time, but an hour and a half too soon is a pretty liberal margin. Conscious of which fact he went for a stroll beside the Serpentine, and then took his ease upon a seat beside the water to think and dream. He had been there some little while when he was accosted by an elderly man.

"You also have joined the idlers?"

The man spoke with a strong foreign accent. He was shabbily dressed. In his eyes there was the sort of hungry look which one sometimes sees in the eyes of a wild animal at those moments when the creature's company is not a thing to be desired. Stewart looked up at him for an instant with surprise, then, when he remembered who he was, he smiled.

"Yes, for once in a way. It is a good thing, sometimes, to be an idler."

The man's tone as he replied was sardonic, where the other's had been merely light.

## Maid of Honour

"No doubt. A place like this, a day like this, what is there better than to idle? If we could only get the slaves who toil for bread in the world's infernos out here to learn that there is nothing better. But we can't. Moments to them mean crumbs; they've none to spare. What right have you to more crumbs than they—those surplus crumbs which mean idleness?"

Judging by his manner the speaker might have been accusing the other of a crime. Stewart laughed.

"Have I any surplus crumbs? I was not aware of it. I idle at my own peril. By the way, are you not idling too?"

The man dropped his chin upon his chest, so that all at once he seemed humpbacked.

"I idling? It is queer idling mine. All the time, everywhere, I am engaged upon my business, often most when I seem least. For mine is a business which requires continual attention, and from me it gets it. I tell you that, Mr. Stewart, between ourselves, to remember."

What the fellow meant Stewart had not a notion. He went off without another word, with long, shambling steps which again curiously recalled a quadruped. Once Stewart had undertaken to write a series of articles on "Underground London". While seeking for material he had come across a society of foreign revolutionaries, of which this man appeared to be the leading spirit. He had been given to understand that his record was a very curious one indeed; from what he had seen of him he found it easy to believe it. But that was three years ago. He had seen and heard nothing of him since. What had brought him to the

## The Romance of a

Park that afternoon of all afternoons? and why had he accosted him? Of course, it was only a coincidence. Still it was as if he had left a taint in the air.

Douglas Stewart rose and shook himself as if to free himself from the other's atmosphere. It was nearly five. He strolled through the Dell towards the Row. People were gathering. Here were idlers enough for his interlocutor of a few minutes ago and to spare. Like the lilies of the field, the majority of them looked as if they neither toiled nor span. He passed on towards Hyde Park Gate, the crowd increasing as he went. He paused for a while at the corner to look about him, deeming it possible that, as he put it, the fine weather might have brought her out before the stated time. He recognised the possibility with a quickening pulse. But no; if she was in the Park she was nowhere within his range of vision. There were pretty girls and women in abundance, but no one who was in the least like her; no one who was a thousandth part as fair. At least so it seemed to him.

Moving round the corner he crossed the Ring Road. There was Achilles in stone; it was odd with what a peculiar sensation he perceived the statue. People were gathered about its base, but not she. It was almost with a feeling of relief that he saw this was so. Bodily and mentally he was in such a singular condition, afraid, yet longing, to see her. Unfortunately he was not sure that his fear was not as great as his longing; he had suddenly become little better than a coward. He really must have a little time to prepare for the meeting. If he met her before he was prepared he would make an utter fool of himself, he was convinced of it; that would put an effectual end

## Maid of Honour

to any desire she might have ever to speak to him again.

He walked a little way towards the Marble Arch, then deposited himself on a penny chair to prepare himself. It was ridiculous what a state he was in, positively perspiring and shivery-shakery, as if there were something the matter with his nervous system, which was absurd, because his nerves were as sound as a bell and he was as strong as a horse. It was twenty minutes past five; in ten minutes she might be there. If when she saw him he was shaking at the knees what would she think? She would think that he was a perfect idiot; his sun would be eclipsed for ever. Then he began to be tormented by the notion that he was much worse turned out than the other men who were going to and fro, who were about him. He had a horrid suspicion that his trousers bagged at the knees; why on earth had he not had them pressed and ironed? He observed that most of the men wore buttoned boots, that many had patent fronts. His were laced, all solid leather. He needed no one to tell him that his hat was not of the latest fashion; if he did a glance at the hats on the heads of other men would have been enough. He had had his nearly two years; he wondered how many men were asking themselves—and others—if he had brought it with him out of the ark. What right had a man to come in great clumping boots and an ancient hat to Hyde Park to meet a lady who was related to half the peerage? If he had not been an asinine fool he would have bought a pair of buttoned boots and a new silk hat, though the purchases had left him penniless. When she saw him, even if he could hold himself upright, would she not

## The Romance of a

be ashamed of his appearance? In which case would she not be entitled to cut him dead? She would probably do it too.

It was half-past five! Good heavens, what was the matter with him? What was he thinking of? He would have to make a bolt to the statue, and that would mean getting hotter than ever. He was just starting to make a bolt when she came right past him.

Right past! a dream of beauty; an object to gaze at and adore; a memory to bear away which would need no rosemary to keep it fresh. There was a man on the right of her and a man on her left; both magnificent men, that is, as regards apparel; for, to be frank, one was big and stout and surely in the fifties; the other was small and thin and even older. She had gone without being conscious of his presence, or, if she had perceived him, for he had a theory that a woman's eyes saw everything and every one, then she had intentionally ignored him. Why had he not sprung up and thrust himself upon her notice? Should he follow and do it now? He noticed that in her progress she was like the chief figure in a procession, receiving and acknowledging salutations from every side. Now and then men and women would cluster round her in little knots; there would be a temporary stoppage; then she would disengage herself and continue on her way.

It was only when she had vanished from sight that he began to follow, but had not taken many steps when he saw she was returning. The little withered old man had gone; the tall and bloated one was still beside her. In his bearing towards her there was something, an air of intimacy, almost of possession, which Mr. Stewart resented; he told himself that that

## Maid of Honour

was because in a person of his appearance such a bearing was unbecoming ; he considered him to be an almost ideal type of a successful tradesman. While she was still afar off the young gentleman was aware that the young lady had seen him ; how he knew it he could not have explained, but he did know it. He forgot, there and then, his laced boots, his old trousers, his ancient hat, all those things which had troubled him so much just now, because of a consciousness which, in some subtle fashion, came to him that she was almost as glad to see him as he was to see her. More, he was convinced that she was endeavouring to rid herself of the man at her side to make room for him ; but, if that were the case, apparently he declined to be displaced, for despite temporary halts to exchange greetings with friends he continued to be her attendant.

When she was only a few yards distant an old lady who was seated in a carriage which was standing by the railing signalled to her ; the girl obeyed the signal, the big man always at her elbow. Mr. Stewart stood still, in accordance, it seemed to him, with a telepathic message which the girl had sent him. He remained motionless until, after a minute or two, the young lady, quitting the old lady in her carriage, advanced straight towards him with outstretched hand and smiling face. The big man came with her, but at the moment he had no eyes for him. Just then Douglas Stewart was capable of seeing nothing else in the whole wide world but one young woman. And she was so sweet, so gracious, so enchanting. In her manner was such exquisite flattery, as if she wished to tell him, without words, how clearly she realised that they understood each other in a very special sense.



## The Romance of a

"I am so glad to see you," she said; it was ecstasy to hear her say so much. "It seems such an age since last we met." He wondered dimly if it had seemed anything like such an age to her as it had seemed to him. "When I saw you the other day I did so want to stop and have a chat, but I was rushing as hard as ever I could to the palace because I was already five minutes late." Think of it! She wanted to stop and chat with him, although she was rushing off to the palace—the Royal Palace—being already late! Was not that a compliment to pay him? Yet there was more to follow. "I must find an opportunity soon—we must make one!—to have a huge conversation; there are heaps and heaps of things I want to talk to you about."

In cold print the words may seem a trifle gushing, but not in the way she uttered them. The most delightful part was that Mr. Stewart was sure, though he could not have told why, that gushing or not they conveyed no more than the speaker meant. While in the ecstasy of his confusion he was delivering himself of a halting reply some one came up to the lady with his hat in his hand; some one whom Mr. Stewart recognised, to his amazement, as the man who had brushed past him the night before in the entrance hall as he was leaving the opera, who had struck down the woman immediately after in the street, and whom he had fruitlessly pursued. Whether he knew him or not he could not tell; there was nothing in the man's manner which suggested it. He greeted the young lady with the most complete assurance and a compliment.

"My dear Miss Chiltern, there has been no one in the Park until this moment."

## Maid of Honour

She laughed.

"It's very nice of you to say so, Mr. Beissmann, though it sounds like the kind of remark which might have served you once or twice before; but, do you know, I've seen crowds of people."

"Ciphers, every one of them; it is only the unit which counts."

She looked from the speaker to Stewart.

"Haven't you seen crowds of people who weren't ciphers?"

"I have seen no one else I wanted to see."

The reply was so pat and so pointed that, seemingly, it surprised the lady into blushing; certainly her cheeks took on an added shade of colour.

"Really every one is digging up nice things." She returned to Mr. Beissmann. "Didn't I see you last night at 'La Bohème'?"

"I was more fortunate than I had dared to hope if you did; I thought it was in vain that I endeavoured to bring myself within the cognisance of your eyes."

"You did not wait till the end."

"No, I did not wait to the end."

There had been a pause before he answered. Douglas had a feeling that both the man and the girl meant more than their words implied, and that on her part the meaning was not a kindly one. Before either could speak again still another man came up, who was so like, yet so unlike, the lady that Stewart felt convinced that they were relations. When he spoke even his voice recalled hers.

"Hollo, Beissmann, I've been chasing you." The words were of course accidental, but they reminded Mr. Stewart of how he had done precisely the same

## The Romance of a

thing the night before. The newcomer went on unconscious of the effect his words had had. "I've something for your private ear. How do, Bob?" He nodded to the big man, then addressed the lady. "Di, I don't know if you're aware that you're blocking the road."

"Am I?" she inquired. "Does it matter? Arthur, let me introduce you to a friend of mine, Mr. Douglas Stewart. Mr. Stewart, this is my brother."

The young gentleman was aware that, as she mentioned his name, the three men looked at him with glances which were not exactly friendly. He also fancied when the brother of the lady perceived what manner of man he really was that the fashion of his countenance changed; his manner, if careless, was not unfriendly.

"Always pleased, Mr. Stewart, to meet a friend of my sister's, she has so few. Now, Beissmann, a brief *little-à-little* with you will be esteemed a favour."

"Dear Chiltern, won't what you have to say to me keep, say, for a quarter of an hour?"

"No, it won't, nor for a quarter of a minute; so off you come."

The lady's brother, slipping his arm through Mr. Beissmann's, drew him away unwillingly. Mr. Stewart suspected him of malicious intention; that it was because he perceived his unwillingness that he was so insistent on his capture. The result was that the young gentleman, left a somewhat awkward third, was beginning to wonder, with a sinking heart, if he had not better take himself away when the girl took the matter in her own hands. She said to the big man:—

"Excuse me one moment, I want to speak to Mr.

## Maid of Honour

Stewart". Moving a step or two aside with him she said: "Don't go away; please wait for me at the Achilles Statue, will you? I have something which I want—which I must say to you, if you don't mind waiting?" As if he minded waiting for her! He was proceeding to explain at some length that he minded nothing less when she cut his explanation short. "Then," she told him, "I'll come to you as soon as ever I can."

With a nod and a smile she went off with the big man, leaving Douglas Stewart in a condition of mind which he would have found it difficult to diagnose. It had all been so different from what he expected, so many things seemed to have happened in such a very few seconds. Who was this fellow, this Beissmann, for that, it appeared, was the creature's objectionable name, that he should be intimate with her? For with a perception which, sharp enough by nature, had been made still sharper by his feelings towards the lady, he gathered that there was more between them than had appeared upon the surface. What had occurred on the previous night he did not precisely understand; the missing lady was the missing link; but that he had been the eye-witness of a cowardly assault upon a woman he had no doubt whatever. Whether he had struck her with a knife or not, he had struck her with something. Clearly a man who was capable of such an action was no fit associate for the Hon. Diana Alys Gwendolen Chiltern. The question was, what was he to do? Should he first of all speak to the man? or should he take the earliest opportunity to warn the lady?

Then again her present companion, that bloated object

## The Romance of a

who seemed to have attached himself to her side like glue, did he look as if he were the sort of man any right-minded person would like to see a beautiful girl with—a girl, moreover, who was related to half the peerage? He hoped that he was something better than he supposed, but if he had been asked to place him, he should have said that he was either a publican who had flourished beyond his deserts, or else an improperly successful brewer.

What was the value of his judgment in such a matter was presently demonstrated in rather surprising style. He was strolling leisurely after the receding couple, taking care to keep behind them at an ever-increasing distance, when he heard one lounge say to another:—

“Did you see that big chap pass with that pretty girl just now?”

“Do you mean the Chiltern?”

“Just so—the Chiltern. She’s the prettiest girl in town, bar none. They’re coupling her name with her companion already; he’s the Marquis of Wandsworth—the owner of Fleetfoot.”

Fleetfoot had won the Derby; was the horse of the year; and even Douglas Stewart knew that the Marquis of Wandsworth was one of the richest noblemen in England. And he had supposed him to be a publican! Of course the speaker might be wrong, but somehow, he doubted it; the fact that the big man was who he was explained why the lady suffered him to continue at her side. So they coupled her name with his? With an uncomfortable feeling of sudden depression the young gentleman perceived how probable this was. Anyhow, she had told him that there was something she particularly wished to say to him, and had

## Maid of Honour

asked him to wait so that she could say it, so that there was still an outside chance for him. There had been something—a touch of emphasis, of intensity—in her manner which told him so. Wild, heroic projects of what he would say to her, and of what he would do, were forming in his mind while he sat on a chair in front of the Achilles Statue and waited.

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER V

### A YOUNG LADY FINDS A FRIEND

SHE kept him waiting some time. So long, indeed, that he wondered if she had forgotten all about him, or if anything had happened to prevent her return. It was after half-past six, and the crowd had considerably thinned, when he saw her come fluttering round the corner from the Row, alone. Rising, he moved towards her, but she motioned him back.

"Sit down," she said.

Looking down she chose two chairs which stood by themselves, so that there was no risk of listeners on either side. Seating herself on one, she invited him to occupy the other.

"I was beginning to be afraid that you were not coming," he told her.

"I am so sorry, but I would have come half an hour ago, only the tiresome people wouldn't let me; and I did so want to have you all to myself, without any fear of being interrupted." The implication was delightful; he seemed to be sitting in a golden haze. "I see you have it." She was glancing at the sprig of rosemary

## Maid of Honour

which he wore in the buttonhole of his coat. "I wondered if you would understand."

"Of course I understood ; I'm not so dull."

"I hoped you wouldn't be, though it was a bit awkward, because you didn't know my name, and I hardly knew how to bring myself home to you. By the way, do you know my name?"

"I did not till last night ; I saw you at the opera, then I found out who you were."

"I saw you, though I was not aware that I had attracted your attention ; you did nothing to show it."

"I did not know you had seen me."

"I could hardly shout. Besides, you went away very soon after I came. I wondered if I had frightened you away. Why did you go?"

There was a pause before he answered.

"Because I was an ass."

"Were you? That seems rather an insufficient reason. What made you behave—like that animal?"

"The sight of you."

"Indeed, that's not a compliment. I hope I don't have that effect on folks in general. The sight of you made me want to recall myself to your recollection."

"It wasn't necessary."

"Wasn't it? I didn't know. So I thought that if I put the word Thorpe in the centre of the page the association of ideas might assist you. What a splendid time we had there ; it was one of the times of my life."

"It was far and away the time of mine."

"When we parted I felt as if I had known you—oh, ever so long, as if you were—a friend. I am so much in want of a friend."



## The Romance of a

"Surely you can have tons for the asking?"

"Of friends? How little you know. I haven't a friend in the world."

Some demon prompted Mr. Stewart.

"Not even the Marquis of Wandsworth?"

She glanced at him with a flash in her eyes.

"The Marquis of Wandsworth? What do you know about the Marquis of Wandsworth?" Her tone changed. "Dear old Bob, he's a cousin of mine." Was that so? Mr. Stewart understood. "At least, he's a sort of a kind of a cousin." Mr. Stewart understood still better. "But Bob could never be the sort of friend I mean; it's impossible; you don't understand. I want to have a friend in whom I could place implicit trust, who would hold my confidence inviolate, and who would ask no questions."

There was a suggestion of italics about her final words which he seemed to find a trifle startling. It was a second or two before he spoke.

"I hardly dare to hint that you would find such a friend in me, if you really are in need of one."

"Should I?—really?" Their eyes met. What he saw in hers he could not have told, but it was something which made his senses swim. "Mr. Stewart, will you do me a favour?"

"I will do anything for you that it is possible for me to do."

"You mean that literally? It is not a mere figure of speech as with all the others?"

"It is not a figure of speech with me, as, if you will put me to the trial, you will learn."

"I believe you; when we were at Thorpe I thought you were like that." She did not clearly define her

## Maid of Honour

meaning, but he seemed to understand, and the understanding seemed to give him pleasure. When she went on it was with a pretty show of hesitation as if she hardly knew how to say what she wished to say. "You—you live at Walham Green?"

"I do; an unfashionable locality, which is hardly likely ever to have come within your ken."

"Don't you think so? I know where it is; it's just the place I want."

"Just the place you want? Walham Green? I'm afraid that now I'm dull."

"If you will wait a moment and will have a little patience I will try to explain as far as I can. Do you—live in rooms?"

"I do; in lodgings."

"Are there—other lodgings in the house in which you live?"

"There are. I occupy what Mrs. Driver, that is my landlady, calls the dining-rooms; there are the drawing-rooms overhead."

"The drawing-rooms? Could you take them for me?"

He stared.

"For you? I don't follow."

"Well, it's not exactly for me; that is— Look here, Mr. Stewart, it's like this." It was as if she tried to bring herself to the sticking-point, and yet found it difficult to express herself exactly. "The fact is, I want them—or, rather, I may want them—for a friend. If I do will you take them for me—say, at a moment's notice?"

He considered for an instant.

"Who is the friend?"

## The Romance of a

"You were to ask no questions."

"I am not asking a question in the sense you mean. It happens that Mrs. Driver has the bad taste to refuse ladies as lodgers, it's a point on which she's adamant—she lets to men only; so if your friend is a lady it would be awkward."

"I see, it's a question of sex. That's all right; Mrs. Driver will be suited on that score. My friend is—is a man." She said this with a smile which, for some reason, occasioned him a spasm of positive pain, then looked down, still smiling; then up at him, with a smile which was gayer than ever. "Since the sex is right, is everything right?"

He slightly stammered.

"Yes, I—I should think so; that's to say, perfectly. Only let me understand; do you want me to engage the rooms at once, or merely to see that they're kept open? When is your friend coming?"

"I don't know. I'm not even sure that he's coming at all; in fact, I—I hope he isn't—that's frank. Indeed, Mr. Stewart, I'll be frank with you and confess that the whole thing is frightfully awkward, I—I can't give you an idea how awkward. Only you understand that you are sworn to the most profound secrecy; you're to be as dumb as if you were my father-confessor."

"I'll breathe a word to no one—ever."

"You'd better engage the rooms until you hear from me again. This friend of mine is an erratic creature; he's so erratic that there's no telling whether he will come or whether he won't; but if he does come it'll probably be—well, if he comes at all it'll very likely be during the next few days. And now I'm going

## Maid of Honour

to test your friendship. You say you'll be my friend?"

Perhaps unconsciously she laid her small-gloved hand upon his arm; he thrilled beneath her touch.

"To the death," he said.

She laughed.

"To the death? That's something like. You sound and look as if you meant it."

"I do."

"What luck it was my meeting you upon the sands of Thorpe."

"It was luck for me."

"For you? I wonder!" There was an obvious sincerity about the sigh with which she punctuated her words which startled him. All at once she became daintily, deliciously, demurely grave. "I'm afraid you're going to be better to me than I deserve; yet I'll try to deserve it, though I shall have to be awfully deserving. I'm going to ask you a dreadful thing."

"Ask it."

"Shall I? I hardly dare."

"Please dare."

"Well, it's this way. I'm not likely to know whether or not this eccentric friend of mine is coming until he's very nearly come, and the instant I do know I shall want you to fly to my help."

"I will."

"Wait a moment, you haven't heard the worst. I want you to promise that you will hold yourself at my disposal during the next three or four days, and that if you receive a wire you will keep any appointment I may make in it, for any place, at any hour of the day or night."

## The Romance of a

"I promise."

"Thank you. I shall have instructions to give you at the last moment, which I shan't be able to give you till the last moment; and it is of the first importance that I may be able to rely upon your coming to receive those instructions—which can only be given by word of mouth—at the only possible moment at which I may be able to give them."

"You may rely on me implicitly."

"Thank you again. If you only knew what a weight you have lifted off my mind. So now we understand each other perfectly."

"Perfectly."

"Luckily just in time, because here's my brother; mind, not a hint of anything to him or to any one."

"Neither to him nor to any living creature."

She had only time to thank him with a glance before the gentleman in question came swiftly towards him.

"Why, Di," he exclaimed, "you're a nice young person. Do you know that it's nearly seven? You'll be late at the palace."

"Nearly seven?—goodness!—how the time does fly! But I had such a deal to talk about to Mr. Stewart, and now I haven't said it all. Our conversation, Mr. Stewart, must be continued in our next. I hope I haven't bored you?"

"As if you could!"

She gave him her hand. As he took it in his he was conscious of a pressure from her slender fingers which sent the blood surging through his veins. Brother and sister went off together, leaving him possessed by emotions which he would have found it difficult to analyse. He watched them swinging along towards

## Maid of Honour

the gate at a pace at which people seldom are seen walking in town, then in more leisurely style he began to move in the same direction. He had not gone far when some one approached him from behind, and to his surprise, but not to his gratification, the man with the hungry eyes of a dangerous wild animal who had accosted him when he was on the seat by the Serpentine fell in by his side.

"So, Mr. Stewart," he began, without any prelude, "you are still idling in charming society. I was not aware that you knew the beautiful Miss Chiltern."

The man's unexpected neighbourhood was peculiarly repugnant to him at that particular moment. He made no attempt to conceal the fact.

"Since your acquaintance with me is of the most casual kind I don't see how you can know anything about my friends."

"Friends? She is your friend? Is she not a little above you in the social scale?"

It seemed to Douglas Stewart that the man was intentionally offensive.

"Mr. — if I ever knew your name I have forgotten it."

"I don't think you ever knew it. You can call me Smith if you like, or Jones, though I see no reason why you should not know that my name is Wodeski. Does that name convey to you no meaning?"

Stewart allowed the question to go unheeded, though it was accompanied by a glance of curious significance.

"Mr. Wodeski, since I am in a hurry I must ask you to excuse me."

"You are in a hurry? Very good, what does it

## The Romance of a

matter? There are one or two things which I would wish to say to you——”

“You can have nothing to say to which I would wish to listen—just now.”

“How do you know till you have heard? I will not interrupt your hurry. I will hurry with you and will talk as we go, so that you shall lose no time. To begin. Were you aware that the beautiful Miss Chiltern was once nearly the cause of a European complication, and that not very long ago?”

“I am aware of nothing of the kind.”

“Then I make you aware. You remember when the young King of Idalia came on a short visit to England what bad weather it was? He consoled himself for the bad weather by paying the most marked attentions to the beautiful Miss Chiltern. You know that?”

“I do not. I must decline, Mr. Wodeski, to permit you to talk to me about Miss Chiltern.”

“Stuff! I do not talk for nothing. At least you are aware that since he was in London the young king has become engaged to a certain princess, in every way a suitable person. It would therefore be very unfortunate if he were to continue to pay his attentions to your beautiful young friend, is that not so?”

“I don’t know why you are favouring me with these extraordinary remarks, Mr. Wodeski. I have not a notion of what you are talking about.”

“Is that indeed so? Let me tell you something. A little bird has whispered in my ear that since yesterday the young king has disappeared from his palace; has a little bird whispered that also to you?”

“What nonsense are you reeling out? I don’t know if you are serious, Mr. Wodeski, but you seem to be

## Maid of Honour

crediting me with some sort of cryptic knowledge which I assure you I don't possess."

"You say so? Well, that's all right. Only if you are indeed a friend of this young lady, so soon as you have an opportunity you will give her a word of warning. You will tell her that there are persons in London whose feelings towards the young king are not those of friendship, and that if they have a chance they certainly will prove it. You will tell her that?"

"I will tell her nothing of the kind, since I do not wish her to think me mad."

"No? Then you may have cause for regret. However, I think it possible that you will tell her. That is all I have to say to you, Mr. Stewart, so now I will leave you to hurry by yourself."



# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TELEGRAM

MR. WODESKI had scarcely quitted Mr. Stewart and Mr. Stewart had hardly begun to ask himself what might be the meaning of the singular utterances which that gentleman had persisted in inflicting on him when he had another encounter, which seemed to him to be at least as surprising as the other. He had just passed through the gate and was turning towards Knightsbridge when some one called to him by name from behind, and looking round he found that he was being pursued by the brother of the lady with whom he had recently been having such a long, confidential conversation, the Hon. Arthur Chiltern. To be quite candid, it was not with feelings of unmixed gratification that he viewed Mr. Chiltern's approach, and that for various reasons. In the first place he might be actuated by a feeling of curiosity which, though possibly justifiable, he—Douglas Stewart—would be quite unable to satisfy. He might want to know what his sister had been talking about ; Mr. Stewart certainly

## Maid of Honour

could not tell him. He might even desire to learn what relations existed between his sister and this unknown young man; how they had become acquainted with each other; who Mr. Stewart was and all about him; and by what title he had so engrossed the Honourable Diana that, as he gathered, she was late for her duties at the palace. If any of these questions were put to him he might find himself in an uncomfortable position, for to none of them would he be able to give what Mr. Chiltern would be likely to regard as satisfactory replies. Should Mr. Chiltern in consequence require him to pledge himself to observe a certain line of conduct towards his sister, which as a brother he would be entitled to do, Mr. Stewart would have to refuse to do anything of the kind, and the position would become more uncomfortable still. It was because he feared that he might have to undergo some such cross-examination that Douglas Stewart saw Mr. Chiltern with more doubt than pleasure. His fears, however, were unnecessary. Mr. Chiltern asked no questions; he evinced no curiosity as to who or what Mr. Stewart was; instead he took him for granted in a fashion which amazed that young gentleman almost more than anything which had gone before.

He came up with an air of laughing good-humour, which, when he saw it, set Mr. Stewart at his ease at once; he thought he had never seen a handsomer man or one who was better dressed.

"Mr. Stewart," he exclaimed, "I hope you are one of those men who are not unwilling to do another man a good turn at a pinch; because, if so, you behold a fit subject for your charity."

## The Romance of a

The brother and the sister both required from him a service? This was odd.

"I don't know," he replied, "that I'm more disposed to do good turns than the average man; but what is the good turn I can do you?"

"Dine with me to-night."

Stewart started and stared.

"Dine with you? Is that what you call doing you a good turn?"

"It is—listen. Mr. Stewart, you're my sister's friend—are you not my sister's friend?"

He regarded him with a quizzical glance which Mr. Stewart fancied was keener than he perhaps wished him to think.

"I don't know that I dare venture to call myself your sister's friend. Miss Chiltern honours me with her acquaintance."

The quizzical glance continued.

"I don't fancy, Mr. Stewart, that my sister would sit in Hyde Park with one whom she merely honoured with her acquaintance quite so long as she sat with you; so I think that, without much courage, you may call yourself her friend—unless your desire is to disclaim the title."

"Indeed no; to be numbered among Miss Chiltern's friends is the height of my ambition."

"Is it? Then let me tell you that you don't aim high. Among Di's friends are some of the queerest of God's creatures."

Mr. Stewart recalled that the girl had told him that she was without a single friend, and he wondered. Mr. Chiltern went on.

## Maid of Honour

"But since that is your ambition let me remind you that I'm her brother, her only brother, and that in serving me you may be serving her. To-night we were to have been eight at dinner; one man has failed me; some unnatural relative has died at the most unreasonable moment. Will you take his place?—the man's, I mean, not the relative's. You perceive that this is a barefaced appeal to your good-nature."

"But," cried Mr. Stewart, who did perceive that events were moving a good deal faster than he had ever supposed was possible, "I don't know where you live or where you are to dine."

"I have rooms at 79 Charles Street and that is where I am to dine. I've a really decent cook, so you'll not run much risk on that account, and he's undertaken to place dinner on the table at half-past eight. Therefore, if you do not live a hundred miles away—by the way, where do you live?"

"I?—I've rooms at Walham Green."

"Walham Green? Ah! that's more than across the road. Still you should be able to slip yourself into another coat, and be with me in excellent time."

"If you really wish me to come."

"Mr. Stewart, there's nothing I wish more."

"Then I'll come; only don't wait for me if I'm a few minutes late—as you say, Walham Green is more than across the road."

"Mr. Stewart, since you are about to be my benefactor it would be the height of ingratitude upon my part were I not to give you a quarter of an hour's law."

So they parted, Douglas Stewart climbing into a

## The Romance of a

hansom, which he was perfectly well aware that he could ill afford. But it seemed to him that since he was apparently launched on a career in which many things might be expected to happen which he could ill afford that one thing more or less did not much matter, and it was certain that he could not get to Charles Street in anything like time if he did not have cabs to take him to and fro. And as the hansom bore him onwards he pondered on many things. He was conscious, more or less vaguely, that he was wading into deep waters, yet he did not care. Where the road which he had commenced to tread would lead him he had not a notion, except that he more than suspected that it might lead him to some uncommonly queer country ; still he meant to walk straight on, or, at least, as straight as he could.

That was to be an afternoon of meetings. Before he entered his own quarters there was to be still another, just as he was alighting from the cab at his own door. As the driver was explaining to him that the fare really ought to be another sixpence a young woman came along the pavement with a roll of music in her hand, who at sight of him stopped and smiled and blushed.

"Douglas!" she cried. "Mr. Stewart!"

"Florrie!" he rejoined. "Miss Moore!"

It was noticeable that in each case the surname seemed to be uttered, as it were, as an afterthought. She was a nice-looking young woman, neatly, though simply, dressed, and there was about her general appearance a something which nine men out of ten would have found distinctly prepossessing. Each seemed to perceive the other with a sensation not only

## Maid of Honour

of surprise, but also, one guessed, of something else as well. In the lady's case there was a hint of sorrow, of reproach; in the gentleman's something which nearly amounted to a consciousness of guilt.

"What has become of you all this time?" she asked. "It is ever so long since we have seen you. Mother was wondering the other day if you were ill."

"I've been working very hard," he said.

"Have you?" In her tone was sympathy. "That was what mother thought you must be doing. But you mustn't work too hard. I think you're looking fagged."

He felt that he was looking something, but the word he would himself have used would hardly have been fagged.

"Oh, I'm all right," he murmured.

"I hear you've left *The Family Hearth*."

"That's an ancient story now."

"But it's new to me. I only heard it the other day, which shows how long ago it is since you have been to see us. I hope it was because you had found something better."

"As yet I have found nothing else at all; I'm on the old racket again—I'm a free lance."

"I am so sorry." There was sorrow in her eyes and a sweetness in her voice which held him dumb. She went on. "Mother will be wanting to know when you are coming to see us again; what shall I tell her? Come to-night. Put your work aside for once in a while, you mustn't be always at it. Come with me and have some tea, then stay and spend the evening; mother'll be delighted."

## The Romance of a

There was a pretty air of tenderness about the way in which she pressed on him her invitation which some men would have found it hard to resist; it seemed to occasion him distress.

"I only wish I could come, but I can't; I'm engaged."

"Is it work? Won't it wait?"

"If it were work I assure you it should wait; but unfortunately it isn't. As a matter of fact I'm going out to dine; it's an engagement I can't get out of."

"To dine? Oh!" One felt that her face had become a little shadowed and that a note of regret had crept into her voice, though she still smiled. "Then come to-morrow."

His distress perceptibly increased.

"To-morrow? There again I'm afraid that I can't promise."

"The day after then? We shall be so glad."

Surely there was something pleading in her smile which, if he detected it, he was constrained to ignore.

"The plain truth is that during the next few days I have such a chaos of engagements that I don't know when I shall be free, but I promise this, the first evening I have I shall only be too glad to come if you will let me."

"You know that we will let you. Then let it be like that—the first evening you feel disposed to come mother will be pleased to see you. Good-bye."

Though she went off with a smile he knew that he had hurt her. As he let himself into the house he called himself names.

## Maid of Honour

"What an unnatural boor I am! I'd clean forgotten all about her! What will she think of me? She's grown prettier than ever. Upon my word I'm not sure that I oughtn't to be kicked."

In the passage—to call it a hall would be to convey a wrong impression of its dimensions—was his landlady, Mrs. Driver. She was Cornish; white-haired and motherly; indeed, Douglas Stewart was a lodger in whom she took an almost maternal interest.

"Wasn't that Miss Moore I saw you speaking to?"

"It was."

"How is that dear lady, her mother? I hear that she's been ailing."

"Ailing? Mrs. Moore? What an uncouth brute she'll think me, I never asked about her."

Mrs. Driver's shrewd old eyes were fixed upon his face.

"You'd other fish to fry, no doubt, driving in hansom cabs."

"By the way, that reminds me. Mrs. Driver, how much do you want for your drawing-rooms?"

"You know very well; I want seventeen and sixpence a week, and sixpence a burner for gas."

"I'll take them for a week."

"Take them? You'll take them? Who for?"

"For a friend."

"What friend?"

"I'll tell you all about him when he comes."

"When's he coming?"

"I'm not quite certain; but that won't matter, because anyhow I'll take the rooms for a week from to-day, so that's understood." The old woman said



## The Romance of a

nothing, but he felt as if there were something disquieting in her glance. He was aware that she knew nearly all about him there was to know, and pretty nearly all about his friends. He did not doubt that she was inquiring of herself for which of them he had taken the rooms; he did not propose to give her a chance to press her inquiries upon him. "I'm going out to dinner, Mrs. Driver; have to be the other side of town at half-past eight; so, as I have to dress, I've got all my work cut out to get there."

He passed into his bedroom leaving her standing in the passage. His sense of hearing made it plain that it was a minute or two before she left it; he knew that she was putting to herself the questions which, sooner or later, she would be sure to put to him.

It was easy to say that he had to dress for dinner, it was another thing to do it. The process being complicated—to make no bones about it—by the accident that his white shirts were not in a condition in which they showed to most advantage as backgrounds to an open waistcoat. The best he had worn at the opera the night before, it was impossible to wear it again. There was not one of the remaining few which, to put it mildly, would not have been the better for repairs. He cursed himself for a fool. Why had he not considered before accepting an invitation to dine with—possibly—seven stars of the peerage? How could he appear in such a company in a frayed white shirt-front, to say nothing of frills on his cuffs? Beyond doubt he was a contemptible ass to think of thrusting himself into society in which he would be, in every respect, entirely out of place. He said this while he wrestled with a pair of scissors in an attempt to trim that front. He

## Maid of Honour

would have asked Mrs. Driver to do it for him—she had a wonderful way that woman with a pair of scissors—only he feared the questions which he was sure that she would ask. His own attempt was not an entire success; he surveyed the result ruefully when he had the garment on. It seemed to him that if he could only manage to keep in a bad light it might not be so very obvious. Anyhow he had no time to mess about, it would have to do. That was the feeling he had about each article of apparel as he donned it in turn, that it would have to do. It was certain that so soon as he had the chance he would have to buy himself some new dress clothes, though he did not see where the chance was coming from; but, in the meanwhile, since those were the only things he had, they would have to do. It was true that the coat had become a little tight under the arms—he had had it he did not know how many years—and that there was the place on the leg of the trousers where the lighted match had fallen and burnt a hole, but what was the use of bothering? He had not an idea who, or what, the Hon. Arthur Chiltern thought he was; he did not doubt that he would be able to place him very nearly when he saw him seated at his dinner-table in that suit of clothes.

He was just leaving the house, and had already opened the front door, when a telegraph boy thrust a yellow envelope into his hand. It was addressed to him. He tore it open.

“To Douglas Stewart, 13 Brenda Villas, Walham Green.

“Please meet me to-night in Birdcage Walk, opposite Wellington Barracks, at 12.30, in accordance

## The Romance of a

with your promise. Have just had news and am greatly worried, but rely on you absolutely. If I am late please wait. I will come as soon as I can. If you fail me I don't know what will happen. My whole trust is in your promise to be my friend.

“ROSEMARY.”

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER VII

### A RUBBER OR TWO

WHEN Douglas Stewart realised who the telegram was from and what it meant his impulse was to wire Mr. Chiltern and excuse himself. Then he reflected that that gentleman would wonder what it was had induced him to change his mind at the last moment ; it was remotely possible that his wonder might take the right direction. Since it was undesirable that he should run the risk of even so remote a chance he decided that it would be better that he should carry out the engagement he had made, and go on from the brother to the sister. So he got into another hansom and went to Mr. Chiltern's to dine. Most of the way he held the telegram in his hand, reading it again and again. It was odd what an effect these re-readings seemed to have on him. They seemed to exhilarate him ; to drive the cobwebs from his brain ; to cause him to forget his worries about the deficiencies of his costume, so that when the cab drew up in Charles Street he was as much at his ease as if he had been going to pay an informal call on some old cronies.

## The Romance of a

An immaculate servant showed him into a room in which several men were assembled. The consciousness that they had all of them been waiting for him did not distress him in the least.

"I'm afraid," he said to his host, who advanced to greet him, "that the half-hour has gone; but you will remember that you gave me a quarter of an hour's law."

"That's true, and you have only had ten minutes." He turned to his friends. "If I were to tell you how great a service Mr. Stewart has done me you would forgive me for keeping you fifteen minutes from your food."

There were no introductions. He found himself talking to men as if they were old acquaintances without knowing their names. Two of them he recognised. One of them was the big man who had stuck so close to Miss Chiltern, whom he had set down as a successful tradesman and whom he had learned was the Marquis of Wandsworth. In evening dress he appeared to better advantage; it suited him. Although he still struck Stewart as being too much on the big side it was easier to believe that he was who he was.

The other man he recognised was Beissmann, whom Mr. Chiltern had walked off with, whom he himself had chased last night into Covent Garden. If in the afternoon when he saw him in a silk hat and a frock coat he had any doubts as to his identity, he had none whatever then. What was more, Stewart fancied that Beissmann himself had some vague recollection of having seen him before, and that the very vagueness of the recollection worried him. In the afternoon he probably had scarcely glanced at Stewart, having only eyes for the lady;

## Maid of Honour

and, indeed, to an extent the same remark applied to the previous night. It was because he had not noticed Stewart, having his whole attention occupied by the lady who awaited him, that he had brushed against him. Quite possibly he had never really seen the young gentleman at all; yet now that he beheld the man in front of him, the sight of him seemed to appeal to some shadowy, uncomfortable memory.

It was the best dinner Douglas Stewart had ever sat down to, from every point of view. The viands were excellent, the service was exquisite, the host was past-master of the art of making his guests feel at home. Before the meal had progressed far the young gentleman found that he was on good terms not only with himself, but, apparently, also with those about him. When it was finished they adjourned for coffee to the room in which they had first assembled. His host came up to him.

"You play bridge?"

"Yes. I play bridge."

"That's good; I ought to have asked you, but somehow I took it for granted."

Mr. Stewart was looking about him at the other men at the two tables set for cards.

"But," he added, "I'm afraid that your points are beyond me."

"Nonsense; it's my fault if you've come without cash. For to-night you must regard me as your banker, should you be a loser."

Should he be a loser! His whole worldly wealth was represented by a sum of under three pounds, actually! It was ridiculous; more, considering the obligations he was incurring, the world he was entering,

## The Romance of a

it was monstrous. But in certain moods he was an optimist, as some of us, even when our first youth is past, occasionally are. He was in a curious mood that night. He felt that strange things were about to happen; nay, that they were happening already. Wherever he looked he saw a girl's eyes which smiled at him, and their smile made the blood hot in his veins. What would he not do for her? It was for her sake he was there. What was it he was about to do? He pressed his hand against the telegram in his coat pocket. "My whole trust," it said, "is in your promise to be my friend." The world could not go better. In the meantime, why not play bridge for unknown points with less than three pounds sterling as his all? He had a notion he should win. If he lost his three pounds he had lost it!

They cut to see who should play together. His host, Mr. Beissmann, the Marquis of Wandsworth and himself cut the four lowest cards; they were to play at one table. In cutting for partners Mr. Stewart fell with his host, and had the deal. He asked as he gave the cards:—

"For what points do we play?"

"Will half-crowns do?" inquired the Marquis.

"Perfectly, so far as I'm concerned," said Mr. Beissmann.

"What do you mean by half-crowns?" asked Mr. Stewart.

"Half-crown points," said Mr. Beissmann.

Half-crown points! That was twelve pounds ten a hundred; if he lost one rubber what dividend would he be able to offer with the whole of his fortune? His host might have read what was passing through his mind.

## Maid of Honour

"Don't you worry about trifles," he observed. "I've already told you that should you lose you're to regard me as your banker."

He found himself with a capital hand. He believed himself to be a decent player—not without cause. Although he had never before played for anything like half-crown points he had held his own in good company so far as skill was concerned. He made no trumps and won four tricks, and presently the rubber—with a balance in his favour of nearly two hundred points. He became the possessor of over twenty pounds; it frightened him. Suppose he had lost; how would it have felt to have become indebted in such a sum to Mr. Chiltern? But such reflections were vain; he had not lost, nor did he lose. He fell again with his host; again they won.

"You are a good player," declared his partner. "I thought you were."

"Mr. Stewart has held good cards," said Mr. Beissmann.

The remark was not a sneer, yet Douglas Stewart felt that between him and the speaker there was something antagonistic. He had on him all the while a doubt as to whether it was not his duty to proclaim aloud what it was he had seen him do. It was true that Mr. Beissmann only addressed him very rarely; it was as if he himself was conscious of no feeling of friendliness towards the young man at his side; when he did address him Stewart found it hard to receive his remarks with courtesy. The owner of Fleetfoot, on the other hand, amused him. Never had he met a person who had struck him as being a congenital victim of boredom until then. It seemed to be too much



## The Romance of a

trouble for the big man to speak; the cards he held seemed not to interest him at all, though he played them uncommonly well. He scored as if he wondered why he did it, and paid his losses with an apparent indifference to the amount which was sublime. Chiltern and Stewart were partners a third time and a fourth. On each occasion they won. Mr. Stewart's luck was surprising; making no trumps in the last hand of the fourth rubber he had four aces.

"I feel that I ought to apologise for my cards," he said. "I've had them all; I assure you I do not do it often."

"In four rubbers I've lost close on a thousand points," Mr. Beissmann announced.

A thousand points? Then Stewart had won nearly a hundred and twenty-five pounds. It was colossal; it seemed to him that it was a thing of which he ought to be ashamed.

"I'm awfully sorry," he protested, "but I couldn't help it—it's the cards."

"Don't be sorry, partner," struck in his host. "I'm not; remember your luck is also mine. What are a thousand points to Beissmann? He'll win them all back before we've done."

Stewart looked at his watch. It was close on twelve; he rose from his chair.

"So far as I'm concerned, I must be off."

"Off! Why, man, we're only just beginning."

"I'm very sorry, especially as I'm the winner; but if I had known that you were going to play bridge I should have told you that I had an engagement which I must keep."

"Won't it wait?"

## Maid of Honour

"Impossible ; I must be off at once."

"If you must !"

"I really must !"

As, before he started, he was finishing a final soda and whisky, Mr. Beissmann came to his side with a question.

"Mr. Stewart, you must excuse my asking, but it has been on my mind all the evening ; haven't I met you somewhere before ?"

They were standing a little apart. Looking him straight in the face Mr. Stewart replied, in a tone which was audible only to him :—

"I cannot say that I have exactly met you before, but I ran after you last night down James Street and lost you in Covent Garden".

The other stared for a moment as if with a total lack of comprehension, then his countenance changed.

"What the devil do you mean ?"

"Don't you know ? Shall I explain publicly ? I was tempted to do so this afternoon in Hyde Park, only I felt that the occasion scarcely suited, nor is this quite a convenient moment either."

He turned away before Mr. Beissmann had time to answer, bade farewell to his host, and was gone.

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER VIII

### IN THE SMALL HOURS

WHEN he was out in the street Douglas Stewart laughed. He was a young man with a sense of humour. The whole situation tickled him immensely. He, a practically penniless scribbler, had been dining with some of the flowers of the English aristocracy, knowing really none of them, and had come away with a hundred and twenty-five pounds of the Marquis of Wandsworth's money. Had any one told him, only this morning, that such an evening's amusement was in store for him, he would have been incredulous. It seemed incredible even now. Yet it had all been perfectly simple; its simplicity had been the strangest part of it.

He pressed his hand against his coat pocket. It contained the Marquis of Wandsworth's bank-notes and the lady's telegram; it struck him that each was capital company for the other. That telegram might result in his being in pressing need of the notes, which had fallen, in the nick of time, like manna from the skies. What he would have done without them now

## Maid of Honour

he did not dare to think, with unknown adventures in store, which, he strongly suspected, would have made short work of his three pounds.

The cash had come so pat, and in such entirely unlooked-for fashion, that he began to ask himself if it meant that his luck was in ; that his turn had come to receive a few examples of fortune's favours. He had been without them long enough. Probably that was what it did mean—that his turn had come. Could he doubt it, since he was speeding now to meet the lady whose whole trust was in his promise to be her friend ?

It was just past midnight ; the appointment was not till half-past. He decided to walk ; even then he should be there well before the time. He went down Waterloo Place, into the Park, along the Mall. It was a fine night, although there was no moon. So soon as he got away from the glare of the electric lights he could see that the sky was alive with stars. The world was abroad. People were returning from the theatres. A continuous stream of vehicles was passing along the Mall. There were foot-passengers as well. London was still awake. As he neared Buckingham Palace he saw that there were lights in the windows. He wondered, as do so many people, what were behind those windows ; which were the king's rooms, which the queen's. He had heard or read, that the rooms in which the sovereigns lived overlooked the private gardens. If that were so, what were the rooms which, looking out on to the courtyard, had lights in the windows ? And where was the lady now ?

What were the duties of a maid of honour he had the very vaguest notion. He took it that she was

## The Romance of a

rather for ornament than for use. He knew that she appeared with the queen on certain public occasions, but precisely what those occasions were he did not know. What services she rendered the queen in the privacy of her own house he had no idea. He presumed that she was in attendance at stated times even when the sovereign was enjoying the seclusion of her home; exactly what "attendance" might mean in that connection was beyond him altogether. Was the lady in attendance now? If so, where? in the palace, or abroad? and in what sense? Was she coming from what he had seen described as "the presence" straight to him?

He turned into Birdcage Walk, pausing at the corner to look about him. There was no one in sight who was in the least like her. He moved along Wellington Barracks. She had not said on which side of the road she would be, but he did not doubt that he would perceive her on the instant wherever she was; there were not enough people about to make that difficult, and momentarily they were growing fewer. When he reached the end of the barracks where the policemen drill he looked at his watch; it was still only twenty past. He was glad that he was in such good time; she would probably be some minutes yet. Should he smoke? He would have liked to; it was just the time and the weather for a sauntering man to enjoy a smoke. But then he only had a pipe; all the evening he had been enjoying his host's cigars. It was a favourite pipe—an old friend; but somehow it did not seem to be quite the thing for a man to be smoking a pipe who was waiting for a maid of honour, who might be coming to him straight from the presence of the queen. So

## Maid of Honour

he left the pipe in his overcoat pocket and wished that he had a cigarette.

Time passed. It approached the half-hour. He stood at the corner, his eyes towards the palace, not doubting that she would come from one or other of its gates. Big Ben informed the world that it was half after midnight—the time of the tryst—but she did not come. He stood, nearly motionless, till Big Ben struck three quarters; still not a sign of her. He had not forgotten that she had bade him wait. He quite understood that in a position like hers it was impossible for her to say exactly when she would be free. Suppose the queen had gone again to the opera; even she herself might not be able to say precisely when her attendants might be released. Still it was a quarter to one. The lady was but nineteen, presumably a resident of the palace; it might not be easy for her to pass in and out, unquestioned, at that hour of the morning. He had heard that the queen was very particular about her maids of honour; that a sharp eye was kept upon their comings and goings; that no mother could keep a sharper one. It was perfectly certain that no mother would allow her nineteen-year-old daughter to go out at a quarter to one in the morning to meet a man, no matter who he was; and he, of course, was nothing and no one. Might he not therefore take it for granted that, to say the least, it was extremely improbable that the lady would put in an appearance? Why, one o'clock was striking. While he had been cogitating another quarter of an hour had gone.

Suddenly he was aware of two things. The one was that he had become an object of interest to a policeman whose special business it seemed to be to hang

## The Romance of a

about the gates of the Park; the other was that he was not the only loiterer who seemed to have a weakness for the precincts of Birdcage Walk, and that the other loiterer, like himself, was a man. He had noticed him two or three times, but it had only that instant struck him that there was something a little curious about the way in which he seemed to keep within sight of him. At that moment he was on the other side of the road, close by the railings of the barracks, as if he did not wish to bring himself into too conspicuous relief. Mr. Stewart turned half round to look at him, conscious of an inclination to cross the road and ask some questions. While he hesitated the policeman advanced and questioned him.

"Fine night, sir."

"Very, and a warm one too."

Mr. Stewart realised that he was being subjected to a keen scrutiny, which resulted, something seemed to tell him, in the officer not being able to decide what to make of him. While the officer scrutinised he talked.

"Not many people about now, sir."

"Most of them gone home to bed, I suppose—those of them who have beds to go to."

"Oh, the most of them have beds—I take it you have."

"Why do you say that?"

The young gentleman looked the constable very straight in the face; the constable looked straight back at him.

"You've been here some time, you know."

"Well?"

"We don't allow loiterers about here at this time of night."

## Maid of Honour

Douglas Stewart decided that it would be the part of wisdom to take the officer into his confidence to an extent.

"I'm hardly a loiterer in your sense, I imagine ; I'm keeping an appointment."

"Queer place for an appointment, isn't it ?"

The young gentleman moved his shoulders ever so slightly.

"It is not of my choosing."

"You've been up and down in front of the barracks for an hour. She won't come now ; you'd better give it up."

Mr. Stewart noticed how the officer took it for granted that the person for whom he waited was feminine ; he smiled.

"I'm beginning to think myself that you're perhaps right, but I'm not sure ; and as I'm taking no risks I'll wait a little longer, with your very kind permission." He held out his hand ; the constable was a sovereign richer. "You needn't be afraid, officer ; there is nothing wrong, only it so happens that I'm waiting for a person whose hours are not so regular as yours and mine. I tell you what you might do. There's an individual across the road—I don't know who it is from Adam, but he seems to be observing me more closely than I quite care for ; why, I've not a notion. But as I don't like to feel that I'm being spied on I'd be glad if you'd go and have a little talk with him."

Without a word the constable crossed towards the barracks. The moment he began to do so the man against the railings began to move away. When the policeman showed a disposition to increase his pace he quickened his ; indeed, he began to take himself away



## The Romance of a

at such a rate that the officer could not have intercepted him without breaking into an actual run. Even when the policeman stopped he went on, as if he had finally decided that this really was no place for him. Mr. Stewart watched the proceedings curiously.

"Now who on earth," he asked himself, "could that have been, and what did he mean by watching me?—for that he was watching me seems pretty clear."

Big Ben struck a quarter past one. Mr. Stewart filled his pipe; he had made up his mind to smoke—the lady could hardly blame him. The half-hour, a quarter to, still not a sign of her. The policeman, who had been observing him all the while, returned to the attack.

"You know, sir, this won't do. I'm sorry if I seem to spoil sport, but I've got to do my duty. You've been here two hours."

"Hardly that."

"Very nearly. It's quite certain that she won't come now."

"I doubt it myself; still, I was asked to wait. Say another half-hour."

"Then in that case you'll have to go off for a bit, even if you come back again. My sergeant will be along here presently; I shall have to make a report. If he finds out that I've let you hang about here for a couple of hours there'll be trouble. If the lady should happen to come while you're away I'll tip her the wink about how it is; that'll be all right."

"Thank you, officer. A short stroll might do me good; if the lady should appear kindly let her know that I shall presently return. I'll go to the end of

## Maid of Honour

Birdcage Walk ; I may see something of that gentleman who did the vanishing trick."

"My sergeant will be coming along the Walk ; better make it the Mall."

"Very well, I'll make it the Mall."

As pipe between his lips he moved towards St. James's Palace, he was struck by the air of solitude which marked the scene. Not a living creature was in sight. Every now and then he glanced behind to see if by any chance the lady had appeared. He caught glimpses of the friendly constable, and once another figure was standing by him—probably his sergeant—but there was no one and nothing else. Big Ben struck two. It was altogether outrageous to suppose that the girl would be likely to meet him now. She would conclude that he had sense enough to understand that something had prevented her. She was probably long ere this between the sheets and fast asleep—perhaps dreaming ; he smiled as he thought of her dreaming. In the morning she would tell him all that she had to tell. It was absurd to imagine that she was concerned in anything so pressing that it was necessary that she should steal to him in the Park at two o'clock in the morning to relieve her mind. Better for him to go home and get to bed, as all the rest of the world had done, if only to avoid the policeman's further impertinent attentions.

He was on the point of arriving at the conclusion that he was the only living thing about when, as he neared St. James's, a carriage, drawn by a pair of horses, came dashing towards him. The window was down. He had a peep of feminine drapery. As it was passing some one leaned forward, a face appeared, framed in the

## The Romance of a

open window. Was it hers? It was so quickly gone that in that light he could not be sure; but if it was! A second carriage followed with the windows closed. Turning he stood and watched them as they went along the Mall. When they reached the end they swept to the right; he did not doubt that they had entered the palace gates. That was the explanation of her non-appearance; the queen had only just come home. He retraced his steps, knocking out his pipe as he went. His pulses quickened—she might come now.

The policeman advanced as he reached the corner.

"No signs of that lady friend of yours; no inquiries have been made."

"Haven't there? What carriages were those which just went by?"

"That's the queen and her suite just come back. Keeps late hours when she's in town; perhaps been having a bit of supper somewhere. I don't know if she still eats supper, but she might do. If I was you I should chuck it up. That young lady of yours is not likely to turn out at this time of the morning—not even for the chance of seeing you."

"You think not? Now I'm not so sure."

The constable eyed him shrewdly.

"What makes you think she'll come?"

"I only hazard a guess. Has your sergeant been?"

"I've been having a little friendly chat with him; he's not a bad sort. He's gone off up the hill. How long do you mean to keep on stopping?"

"That, I fancy, is on the knees of the gods."

He returned to his corner, the constable watching him as he went. The quarter struck, and half-past two.

## Maid of Honour

Then a figure came fluttering through the gates close by where at the moment the policeman chanced to be standing. It was the Lady of the Sands. He moved swiftly towards her; when she saw him she gave what might have been a little cry of joy.

"Thank goodness you are still here. Vi said she saw a man as we came down the Mall; I thought it might be you, but I was afraid that you had gone."

He did not ask who "Vi" was, but concluded that it was "Vi" who had put her head out of the carriage window. He could see, despite the wrap she had thrown over her frock, that she was in full evening dress; a silk scarf was about her head. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes sparkled; she was all excitement. He thought he had never seen her look so lovely. As she fell in at his side he trembled.

"You told me to wait, so I waited. I would have waited all night long."

"You are very good; why are you so good to me?"

"Because"—he would have liked to say "Because I love you better than my own life," but he did not dare—"because you said you trusted me. I am not good to you, it is you who are good to me. I only want to prove that I am worthy of your trust."

"It's—it's very lucky that I happen to have found such a friend just when I'm most in need of one." She spoke hesitatingly, as if she were afraid of being overheard, of being seen. "We were back much later than I expected; I thought we never should get back. I had the greatest difficulty in getting here—you don't know what a risk I am running; but I simply had to come, there was no other way. Now listen carefully,

## The Romance of a

and mind—it was in the compact—you're to ask no questions."

"I'm wholly at your service, ready to do exactly what you bid me, without thought of anything but of how to serve you."

They were standing face to face a few yards up Birdcage Walk a little in the shadow of a tree. Her eyes, as they looked into his, seemed to flash and gleam.

"How good you are to me!"

"Please don't say that!"

"No? Then I won't—I won't even thank you. In fact there isn't time; it would take an hour at the least. Now attend! You remember I told you I might want you to take rooms for a friend of mine?"

"I've taken them."

"You have? That's good, because he's coming. I—I heard it directly after I left you this afternoon."

"When is he coming?"

"He is in the boat-train which is due at Victoria at 5.40 this morning—in about three hours from now. I want you to meet him."

"I will. Does he expect me?"

"No, he doesn't expect you. I don't know quite whom he does expect; but if you tell him that I sent you he will understand."

"How shall I know him?"

"He's travelling all alone; he's young—hardly more than a boy—rather short; brown faced. I'm afraid he's rather difficult to describe."

"What's his name? If I were to address him by his name that would be a certain means of recognition."

"His name?" She repeated the words again, as if

## Maid of Honour

they tickled her. "Oh, his name?" Her face was lighted by a whimsical smile. "His name is Perkins."

"Perkins?"

"Yes, just Perkins."

"Then I'm to look for a young man travelling alone ; and I'm to ask him if his name is Perkins ; and if he says it is it will be all right?"

"Quite all right. Then you're to take him to his rooms, and to send me a wire, addressed to the palace, like this, 'Goods duly arrived and safely housed'—you needn't put your name. And you're to give him this note." She drew an envelope out of her bosom. "You see, it's addressed to 'Mr. Perkins,' just Perkins. Give it when you get him home."

"I hope you understand that the rooms I have taken are quite humble ones ; you will appreciate how humble when I tell you that the rent is only seventeen and sixpence a week."

"Only seventeen and sixpence a week?—seventeen and six? How—how funny! It'll serve him right. That's just what I want ; at any rate he will be private there."

"He will certainly be private."

"You know his coming is a frightful nuisance ; he never really ought to come at all ; he's behaving in the most ridiculous way ; but since he is coming nobody must know it—perfect privacy is the first essential. But you know that. Now before I go tell me what you understand."

"I'm to meet the 5.40 boat-train at Victoria ; introduce myself to a passenger named Perkins ; tell him I've come from you ; conduct him to the rooms I've

## The Romance of a

taken ; send you an unsigned wire, 'Goods duly arrived and safely housed,' and give him your note."

"You've got it all exactly. Mr. Stewart, you—you are a friend. But please remember that I shall be on tenterhooks till I receive that wire."

"Suppose he doesn't come?"

"Please don't suppose anything so—so uncomfortable! Then you must wire, 'Goods not arrived'. But he will come! Now I'm off!"

"Mayn't I offer you my escort?"

"Gracious, no! I wouldn't be seen with you for the world! Good-bye!"

She fluttered across the road and through the gate. He waited a minute or two and then followed. The policeman came towards him with official tread.

"She was worth waiting for, sir."

"I think she was."

The constable made a significant gesture with his hand.

"That chap who was hanging about the barracks is back again. He saw the lady come ; he's been watching you together. I fancy he's round the corner now, by the palace railings ; if you were to move quickly you might nab him."

Mr. Stewart moved so quickly and so softly that, finding an individual with his face glued to the railings, peering into the palace yard, before he realised that any one was coming he had him by the shoulders. The man began to struggle so soon as he was gripped.

"Officer," cried Stewart, "come here." The officer came. "This man has been annoying me for some time ; I should like you to have a look at him."

"Bring him to the light."

## Maid of Honour

Stewart hauled him into the full glare of an electric lamp. The man was undersized, dirty and shabby; evidently a foreigner—possibly an Italian. Wriggling for all he was worth he burst into a torrent of broken English.

“You let-a me go!—you let-a me go! I do nothing! Why you hold me? You let-a me go!”

Mr. Stewart continued to hold him, unmoved.

“Do you know him, officer?”

“I know nothing to his advantage. Do you know him, sir?”

“I shall know him if I see him again, I promise you. I warn you, my friend, that if I ever catch you spying on me again, I’ll make you smart.”

“You let-a me go! I do nothing! You let-a me go!”

His captor let him go. The fellow tore off up Buckingham Gate.

“He’s a foreigner,” observed the constable sententiously. “There are a lot of them about up to all sorts of games; in fact you don’t know what games they are up to. Of course I can’t say what business you had with the lady, but I shouldn’t be surprised if he and his friends took a bit of interest in it, whatever it was.”



# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER IX

### MR. PERKINS

THE early morning boat-train was crowded with passengers; as it stopped by the platform they came streaming out of every carriage. In the throng it was not easy to detect individuals. Miss Chiltern's description had been so slight that as a guide it was almost useless; brown-faced youths seemed to be there in quantities. Mr. Stewart felt that he could hardly go up to them one after the other, inquiring of each if his name was Perkins. He was beginning to think that his task was going to be more difficult than he had supposed when something occurred which, in itself unwelcome, still gave him the hint which he required.

He had arrived some little time before the train was due, but early though he was he found the arrival platform already in the occupation of a number of individuals, among whom were several who were evidently foreigners. Since the train was bringing persons from the continent there was nothing singular in that; nor, since it conveyed third-class passengers, was there anything remarkable about the fact that among the

## Maid of Honour

attendant foreigners were some who obviously belonged, socially, to the lowest class. What struck Mr. Stewart unpleasantly was the notion that more than one of these persons took an interest in him. As he came on to the platform there came from behind him an odd little whistle. Who the whistler was he did not look behind him to learn, not supposing that the sound could have the slightest connection with him, but he did notice that when the sound was heard a man, who had his back towards him as he passed, swung right round and stared at him in a manner which struck Mr. Stewart as being a little odd. More, as he passed along the platform it seemed to him that other men eyed him in a fashion about which, to his suspicious sense, there was something which was slightly peculiar. Although each of these persons was in almost every case alone and had no outward and visible association with anybody else, they had this in common, that they were all of them unmistakably not English, and that they all recalled, in some indefinable manner, Mr. Wodeski, the man with the hungry eyes, who had attached himself so persistently to him the day before in the Park. By the time he had reached the end of the platform Douglas Stewart had a decidedly uncomfortable feeling that that little whistle might have been meant for a signal and had been intended to announce to a number of unprepossessing-looking strangers the fact of his appearance on the scene. Aware of his own insignificance, why such an announcement should have been made he could not say ; and he would have told himself that such a notion was merely a proof of the activity of his imagination had it not been for a really singular incident.

## The Romance of a

Proceeding right down the platform he reached a point where he had it all to himself. It was pretty certain that however long the train might be it would not reach down to where he was, therefore those who were awaiting it were assembled higher up. He was telling himself that the notion that these strangers could be interested in him was an absurd one, when he became conscious that somebody else had also come up the platform as far as he had, and presently this person appeared at his side. The man—it was a man—was on Mr. Stewart's left, at a distance from him of perhaps six or seven feet. He was a short, slight, elderly man, with a grey moustache and well-groomed, small-pointed beard. Short though he was there was about him an air of what one might describe as consequence, which would have made him a noticeable figure anywhere. This was not only owing to his carriage, which was that of a man who is sure of himself, but also in some degree to his attire; for already at that matutinal hour—it was not yet half-past five—he was clad in an immaculately fitting, tightly buttoned frock-coat, an exquisite carnation in the button-hole, patent leather button boots, pearl grey suède gloves, a silk hat, evidently built to his own particular design, with a slightly bell-shaped crown and a perfectly straight brim, which looked as if it had come from the manufacturer's not more than ten minutes ago, and which he wore a little on one side. At the moment he reached Mr. Stewart his hands were behind his back, and between his fingers was a thin cane of some dark, very pliant, wood, with a gold knob at the top.

Douglas Stewart was observing this radiant vision when the vision addressed him, without, however, mov-

## Maid of Honour

ing in the slightest degree closer to him, in a low, clear voice, which was just loud enough to be audible to him from the distance at which the speaker stood. His words were sufficiently surprising.

"Don't look at me, don't come nearer, don't speak, don't glance round. Don't alter your pace, walk straight on; don't do anything to show that I am speaking. Just listen. I don't know who you are or what errand has brought you here, but there are certain persons on the platform who are members of a society whose ways are not the ways of pleasantness. A signal has just been given them to pay particular attention to you. That generally means that unless the person to whom they are to pay attention keeps a very keen look-out something extremely disagreeable will probably happen to him before very long. You may know this, in which case pray pardon my seemingly impertinent interference; but, with the presumption of old age, I thought that I would drop you a hint. Walk right on to the end of the platform. Pay no attention to me if you see me again. I'm going back."

The speaker, stopping, stared up at the roof as if there was something there which had caught his eye, then wheeling, returned the way he had come. Mr. Stewart, doing as he was bid, walked as far as he could walk without trespassing on the line, with sensations which had, at any rate, the element of novelty. Of course the elderly gentleman might have been playing the fool and might have gone out of his way to tell a gratuitous lie to a perfect stranger, but Douglas Stewart doubted if that was what he had done.

The coincidence of his own fancies and of the

## The Romance of a

stranger's words had been too marked. He would have liked to have asked the stranger who he was; but he felt that there might be reasons to induce him to withhold the information. He would have been glad to have been favoured with fuller details; but he could conceive of sufficient causes why he would have to be content with what he had received. As the situation stood, so far as he was himself concerned, he was only too conscious that it wore an air of mystification which was almost uncanny. It was as if he were playing a game with other players, without knowing what the game was, who the other players were, or what were the stakes for which he played.

It was with a sense of puzzled irritation that, as he gained the extremity of the platform, he perceived that the train was just coming into sight. Hurrying back, it overtook him and came to a standstill as he was abreast of the foremost coach, and in a moment or two the platform was covered with various specimens of humanity. As has been said, in the crowd it was not easy to distinguish persons; and he would probably have found himself at a loss to discover a brown-faced youth named Perkins had it not been for an apparently trivial occurrence to which reference has already been made. He had been for some seconds conscious that two unpleasant-looking foreign gentlemen were standing in much closer neighbourhood to him than he desired, when one of them uttered some of the very few Italian words with which he was acquainted.

"By God!" he exclaimed. "He is there."

Not only did he pronounce these words in tones and with an emphasis which made them noticeable even in the noisy crowd, but they were accompanied by a ges-

## Maid of Honour

ture which gave them a curious significance. Taking his companion by the shoulder with one hand as if to constrain his attention, he pointed along the platform towards the train. Following the man's hand he saw that it indicated an individual who was standing outside a compartment with what, under the circumstances, was an air of odd amusement. Mr. Stewart recognised in a flash that this individual was brown-faced; that he was young; that he was not very tall; that he was alone. Without pausing to consider what the fellow might mean by his public exclamation and conspicuous gesture, Douglas Stewart made as direct a line as he could towards the brown-faced youth. As he advanced he perceived that the stranger was incongruously clothed in a fur coat, which was very wide and full and reached almost to his feet, and a queerly shaped peaked cap. Both garments were very well in their way—the coat looked as if it might have cost a fortune; but it suggested a motor ride in January rather than a Channel passage in July. The person inside the coat was looking about him at the bustling people with an air of humorous appreciation, as of one who sees for the first time some funny film shown by the cinematograph. As Stewart approached he slightly raised his hat.

"Pardon me, but is your name Perkins?"

The stranger had big, dark and very bright eyes. He looked at Stewart as if he had been some strange object, the like of which he had never seen before. Then he laughed—there was nothing to show what at—and he said:—

"Oh, yes, I am Perkins—Mr. Perkins; that is so".

He spoke, with a strong foreign accent, fluent English in a pleasant, musical, boyish voice.

## The Romance of a

"Allow me to introduce myself. I am Douglas Stewart; I come from Miss Chiltern."

"Miss Chiltern?—Oh, Miss Chiltern! Douglas Stewart, I greet you with both my hands."

Which he did do, extending them cased in huge fur gauntlets. When Stewart held out his Mr. Perkins firmly gripped them both with so hearty and prolonged a grip that the young Englishman seemed a little embarrassed.

"Where is your luggage?" he asked.

"Luggage?" Mr. Perkins repeated the word as if it puzzled him. "Oh, my luggage." Again he laughed. "I have none—all my luggage is upon me." As if in answer to the other's look of surprise, he added, "As you English say, I travel light".

Mr. Stewart hesitated a moment as if the other's announcement of his freedom from encumbrances of any kind was unexpected. Then he said:—

"In that case, if you are sure you have no luggage, we may as well be off, if you will let me take you to your rooms."

"Let you?" He seemed to have a trick of repeating Mr. Stewart's words. "It is with the greatest pleasure, Mr. Stewart, that I will let you take me anywhere." He looked about him as if both bewildered and amused. "Which way shall we go?—through all these people? They make a great confusion."

"There generally is a pretty fair amount of confusion when people get out of a boat-train; don't you think so?"

"Think so?" Again the repetition. "If you say so I do not doubt it; it is the first time I see it."

Stewart led the way to a hansom standing in the road.

# Maid of Honour

"Jump in."

"Jump in? Into—Oh, into this ; this is most delightful ; in I jump."

Having directed the driver, Mr. Stewart followed Mr. Perkins into the cab. The stranger seemed to be tickled by the novelty of his position.

"You call this a hansom ? No. Of course, a hansom-cab. I remember very well. To ride in one was a pleasure I promised myself that one day I would like to have ; now I fulfil my promise."

As the vehicle moved out of the station into the Buckingham Palace Road, Mr. Perkins stared to the front and to the right and left with the lively curiosity of a child to whom everything is strange. So absorbed was he by the passing show that he seemed disinclined to talk. Douglas Stewart observed him with mingled feelings, which he would have found it difficult to disentangle. While he was not handsome he was not ill-looking, and while his manners were easy and his method of address almost familiar, there was about him a something aloof which inspired the keen-sighted Mr. Stewart with a feeling that this young gentleman was of a type which he had not met before. The idea of his becoming the tenant of Mrs. Driver's drawing-rooms struck him as ridiculous almost to the verge of tragedy. Had he realised what manner of young man this young man would be he would certainly have protested against the idea of taking him to Brenda Villas, Walham Green. The only thing for him to do now was to endeavour to prepare his mind for what was coming. With this view he broke into the keen interest which his companion seemed to be taking in the somewhat tawdry surroundings of the Pimlico Road.



## The Romance of a

"Miss Chiltern asked me to take rooms for you, so I have taken some in the house in which I myself have lodgings; but I am afraid you'll not find them very swagger."

"Swagger? What is that? One thing I tell you, Mr. Stewart, I hope before very long you give me something to eat; I want food; I starve."

"I daresay it won't be very long before Mrs. Driver can let you have something in the breakfast line, though I don't suppose that that will be anything very special either."

"Who is Mrs. Driver?"

Stewart explained.

"I only trust that Mrs. Driver will give me food. You will understand when I say that I taste nothing since in Paris yesterday about five o'clock."

"When did you leave Paris? Did you dine before you left, or on the train?"

"Neither; I did not dine at all. I had a good breakfast—oh, an excellent breakfast; but afterwards I had finished for the day."

"But why? Weren't you hungry?"

"Hungry? Of course I was hungry! Who am I that I should not be hungry? But I had no money."

"No money?"

"Not what you call so much as a farthing! I spent all that I had upon my breakfast. It was droll."

"I should think that droll was hardly the word. It must have been uncommonly awkward."

"It was very awkward. I walked about the streets all day because I had not the money to pay a cab. I had said to myself, I will see Paris; but it is not easy

## Maid of Honour

for a stranger to do it when he has no money in his pocket."

"That I can believe."

"Presently I grow hungry; the results even of an excellent breakfast do not last for ever. I look into the confectioners' shops; they are full of good things, but they are not to be given away. I stand at the doors of the restaurants; the scent is exquisite, but if I go in and eat the food I am smelling they would want me to pay a bill."

"That is not unlikely."

"I could not pay. What the result would be I cannot tell; I am not disposed to try—better that I should go without. About five o'clock I meet a woman of the working-class; she had a basket on her arm; in her hand a packet of chocolate. I say to her, 'Madame, if you will give me your chocolate I will give you this ring'. I take a ring off my little finger and show it her. She takes my ring, I take her chocolate; so we part good friends."

"Was the ring worth anything?"

"Perhaps fifty or sixty pounds."

"Really?"

"I know little about such matters; it was a good diamond."

"A diamond ring for a packet of chocolate! She got the best of the bargain; no wonder you parted friends. Why didn't you raise money on it? You might have got what you asked."

"That is what occurred to me—but not until after I had eaten the chocolate."

"You are a philosopher, Mr. Perkins."

"I am a philosopher?—you think so?" Mr. Perkins

## The Romance of a

looked at his companion with a twinkle in his bright eyes. "However that may be, Mr. Stewart, I am hungry."

"Then you shan't be hungry very much longer, because here we are."

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER X

### THE NEW LODGER

THE cab stopped short; the two young men got out.

"Let me introduce you, Mr. Perkins," said Stewart, as he threw open the iron gate which opened on to the six feet of tiled path which preceded the front-door steps, "to your new home."

Mr. Perkins seemed bewildered; he was looking about him as if he were not sure that he could believe the evidence of his own eyes. Brenda Villas consisted of a row of small and, for the most part, untidy houses, which stood in a street which one could only hope had once been brighter. There was about it an air of something which was almost worse than depression. Mr. Perkins, still outside the gate, continued to stare at his surroundings as if he found it difficult to credit that he was really where he was. Then he looked at Mr. Stewart as if he were some object whose strangeness was beyond believing.

"You—you live here?" he inquired.

"I do; and, for the present, you are going to live here also."

## The Romance of a

"I—I am to live here—in this place? But why?"

"Miss Chiltern asked me to get you rooms, and here they are."

"Yet I do not understand; why in such a place as this? It is of all places I have ever seen the most droll."

"I understood from Miss Chiltern that you wished to be somewhere where you could be private—in complete seclusion."

"In complete seclusion?—here I am in complete seclusion? Now perhaps I begin to see. It is—it is—a surprise. I am in Miss Chiltern's debt."

By the time they reached the top of the steps Mrs. Driver was holding the front door open in her hand. Stewart performed the ceremony of introduction.

"Mrs. Driver, this is Mr. Perkins for whom I have taken your drawing-rooms."

The lady eyed the new tenant as if he was not at all the sort of person she was prepared to associate with the name of Perkins. He, on his part, was regarding her as if she was the most wonderful object he had yet beheld.

"Mrs. Driver! You are Mrs. Driver?"

"That is my name."

"Mrs. Driver, permit me to assure you that I starve; I entreat you to give me food; since yesterday morning I eat nothing but a little chocolate."

"My niece is lighting the kitchen fire; so soon as it's properly started I'll get you some breakfast. Mr. Stewart, where is the gentleman's luggage?"

The gentleman answered for himself.

"Luggage? I have no luggage; all my luggage I have on me. I have no luggage and no money."

## Maid of Honour

Mr. Stewart hastened to explain.

"That's all right, Mrs. Driver. I make myself personally responsible for Mr. Perkins."

"I hope it is all right," observed the lady. "Mr. Perkins seems a foreigner, which is strange with a name like Perkins, and I never have held with foreigners. The last gentleman who took my drawing-rooms had no money and no luggage, and left owing me three weeks' rent."

"You need have no fear, Mrs. Driver, of anything of that kind. Send up one of those splendid breakfasts of yours to Mr. Perkins; I'll show him to his rooms. Mr. Perkins, straight on up the stairs."

Stewart induced Mr. Perkins to go up first, interposing himself between him and Mrs. Driver, being aware that that lady had a habit of uttering her thoughts with a degree of candour which now and then was trying. As Mr. Perkins ascended he said something in an uncomfortably audible tone which his fellow lodger sincerely hoped that the lady did not hear.

"That is a funny old woman; very comic."

Douglas Stewart was convinced that that was a description of her which Mrs. Driver would not have liked at all. When they reached the landing he opened the drawing-room door.

"These are your apartments, Mr. Perkins."

Entering, Mr. Perkins gazed about him with an air which suggested something akin to stupefaction. Presently, drawing a long breath, he said to himself first something in a foreign language which had a strenuous sound, and then something in English which was evidently intended to express amazement.

## The Romance of a

"For the love of God!" Then, after a further interval of silence, in which he continued to use his eyes to the most advantage, he said to Mr. Stewart: "You spoke of apartments. Here is only one."

Mr. Stewart introduced his companion to the room at the back.

"This is your bedroom."

The sight of it, if the thing was possible, seemed to astonish him even more than the other room had done. For some seconds it seemed as if his feelings were too deep for speech. Again he drew a great breath.

"It is here I am to sleep—here! Dear God! It is certain that I am in Miss Chiltern's debt!" He returned to the front room. "Have I no other apartments?"

"These are the only two rooms Mrs. Driver has to let."

"Am I to live, to eat, to receive my guests here?"

"The accommodation is not very good, but it is all Mrs. Driver has to offer. And though she has a tongue, and likes to use it, you will find that she will do her best to make you comfortable. You will remember that I warned you of what was in store."

"You warned me? That was kind of you. Please to remove my coat."

Mr. Perkins tossed his cap on to a chair. Somewhat to his surprise Mr. Stewart found himself relieving him of his great fur coat, while its wearer stood as stiff as a post. Its disappearance revealed Mr. Perkins as a slightly built youth in a blue serge suit; a youth with an oddly peremptory manner.

## Maid of Honour

"I hope Mrs. Driver will give me some food before I expire."

"While you're waiting you'll be able to read this note which Miss Chiltern asked me to give you on your arrival. I shall be back directly."

Having handed over the letter Mr. Stewart was moving towards the door when he was required to remain where he was in a tone of authority which he found a little startling.

"Wait, Mr. Stewart, if you please." Douglas Stewart, who was not accustomed to being addressed by young gentlemen who were even more youthful than himself, as if he were a menial, would have liked to resent the other's tone, but for some cause he did not find it easy. He remained standing in the open doorway while Mr. Perkins took Miss Chiltern's letter from its envelope. Its contents seemed to afford him gratification. He smiled for the first time since the cab had drawn up at Brenda Villas. He re-read the letter; then held it out in front of him, in both hands, at arm's length, exclaiming: "From the most delightful woman in the world—the most beautiful, the most divine. It is for her sake I am here. I kiss her writing!" He pressed the open page to his lips not once, but again and again. It reminded Douglas Stewart of what he himself had done the day before. He wondered if his action had been quite so theatrical. Certainly there had been no spectator. He had a feeling that Mr. Perkins did not look upon him as a person who counted. The remarks which the young gentleman addressed to him when he had finished kissing the lady's writing showed that in so thinking he was probably not far wrong. "It now



## The Romance of a

becomes necessary, Mr. Stewart, that I should have some clothes."

This time Mr. Stewart did endeavour to show that he resented the other's style of address.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I must have, for instance, two or three what you call frock-coat suits; two or three dress suits; some hats, some shirts, and everything of that kind—at once."

"I'm afraid that you are not likely to get articles of that kind which would suit you in Walham Green at a moment's notice."

He had it near the tip of his tongue to ask where, in any case, the money was coming from to pay for them; but there were the hundred and twenty-five pounds in his own breast pockets. No considerations of the kind seemed to trouble Mr. Perkins. He dismissed Mr. Stewart's words as if they were not worth attention.

"I know nothing of Walham Green. I take it that there are places in London where articles of every kind can be had. I tell you I must have them. Miss Chiltern writes that she comes to see me. I cannot receive a lady in these clothes. Besides, since the day before yesterday I have not changed. It is necessary that I should have what I require at once. Where are you going?"

"First to send a telegram and then to see if it is possible to get what you want."

"I thought, Mr. Stewart, that you said that Miss Chiltern had placed you at my service—that you were, in effect, in attendance on me?"

The speaker was placing on Mr. Stewart's words a

## Maid of Honour

construction which that gentleman had not intended they should bear.

"You misunderstood me, Mr. Perkins. I do not suppose that Miss Chiltern wished me to keep you always in sight. I tell you I have a telegram to send, and I must see about those things you want. I'll be back again as soon as possible."

"Then who is in attendance while you are absent?"

"In attendance? There's Mrs. Driver downstairs and her niece, who acts as servant, and there's the bell; you only have to ring it to have either or both of them in attendance. Anyhow I'll only be away a few minutes; I'll be back in time to breakfast with you."

"To breakfast with me—you!"

"Yes, me; that's to say if I'm not intruding; of course I'll breakfast by myself alone in my own room if you prefer it."

"No! It does not matter. Only it is droll!"

Mr. Perkins laughed; there was something in his laughter which irritated Douglas Stewart.

"I assure you, Mr. Perkins, that I am beginning to see the drollery of the thing quite as clearly; only, I rather fancy, from a slightly different point of view."

As, quitting the room, he shut the door behind him he was conscious that he had left Mr. Perkins standing in the centre of the room, staring after him in unmistakable amazement. As he descended the staircase it seemed to Mr. Stewart that the Lady of the Sands had placed on him a burden which it was a little hard to bear. It was perhaps because he had been up all

## The Romance of a

night that he did not feel perfectly at peace with himself and with the world; but he did trust that Mr. Perkins would not continue to be an inmate of Mrs. Driver's modest establishment for too long a period. He had already a feeling that, so far as he was himself concerned, he would be content to see no more of Mr. Perkins than he could help.

Mr. Stewart was going to despatch the promised telegram to the Lady of the Sands. Crossing the road into the street which was the nearest way to the telegraph office he found, just round the corner, leaning against the wall a man. This man had, abstractly, possibly a perfect right to be where he was, yet the sight of him annoyed Mr. Stewart. He was a long, loosely built person, in an old frock-coat and other garments to match. He had a dirty red scarf round his neck in lieu of a collar and tie. He had a huge black moustache, a superabundance of tousled black hair, which was crowned by a battered billicock; there was about him a generally unwashed appearance which suggested that for some time he had had nothing to do with soap and water. The man could hardly be English. Still that seemed to be an insufficient reason why Douglas Stewart should take it for granted that he had done him a personal injury. At sight of him the young gentleman stood still, looked him up and down, and then observed:—

“So there's another of you”.

The stranger looked back at him as if, not unnaturally, he was surprised.

“Eh? What's that?”

“You know very well what it is. You see that road

## Maid of Honour

—that's the Fulham Road—you take yourself along it to the very end, right out of this neighbourhood—quick!”

The stranger's surprise did not seem to have appreciably abated.

“What for?”

“Because it would be good for your health and for mine.”

“You been drinking.”

It was Mr. Stewart's turn to start. The charge coming from such an individual was not a nice one at any time; at that hour of the day it was singularly out of place. Stewart glanced round, in search of a constable; there was not one to be seen. He was conscious that in the absence of such a functionary his position was a delicate one, so he temporised.

“I shall be back in a few minutes. If I find you here on my return I shan't ask any questions, but I shall do my best to clean the street with you, so you watch out. I don't propose to be spied upon by you and your friends if I can help it.”

Then Mr. Stewart went about his business. He sent the agreed telegram to the Hon. Diana Chiltern; sent it with a sort of wrench, as if its despatch involved the drawing of a tooth. He wired to a firm of tailors, asking them to send as soon as they could, for trying-on purposes, a full assortment of all the garments necessary for a gentleman's wardrobe, undertaking to pay prompt cash for those retained. And then returned the way he came. When he reached the corner the man was gone. He hung about, looking for him everywhere; there was not a sign of him to be seen.

## The Romance of a

Apparently, taking the hint, he had quitted the neighbourhood.

Probably Mr. Stewart had been away altogether some twenty or thirty minutes when he re-entered No. 13 Brenda Villas. Mrs. Driver, meeting him in the hall, followed him into the sitting-room.

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Stewart," she began, without any kind of prelude, "but I don't understand the meaning of this."

"The meaning of what, Mrs. Driver?"

"And I cannot say, Mr. Stewart, that I think you've treated me altogether well, or as I expected."

"I'm afraid it is I who don't understand you, Mrs. Driver."

"Oh, yes you do, Mr. Stewart, and none better. No one knows better than you that if there's one thing I can't abide it's foreigners; I'd sooner have a waggon-load of snakes in the house than one of them; yet look at the trick you've played me."

"You allude to Mr. Perkins?"

"Mr. Perkins!" Her tone was possibly intended to represent the sublimated essence of all scorn. "When you took my drawing-rooms yesterday afternoon you told me they were for a friend; when you knocked at my bedroom door in the small hours this morning, because it was nearer three o'clock than four, you said that your friend was coming, that you were going to meet him, and that his name was Perkins."

"I did."

"If Perkins is not an English name I don't know what name is."

"It has always struck me in that light."

## Maid of Honour

"But if your Mr. Perkins is an Englishman I never met one. I don't want to seem impertinent, Mr. Stewart; as you are aware that's not my way; but I should like to know who your Mr. Perkins is, and where he comes from. He's got no luggage; he's got no money."

"That's all right, Mrs. Driver; as I've already told you, I make myself answerable."

"I daresay; but when it comes to that, Mr. Stewart, I didn't know that you had much money to throw away. But anyhow I don't like it, and it's not respectable. And there's another thing I don't like about him, and that's his manners."

"What's the matter with his manners?"

"A good deal, I should say; they may be foreign, but they certainly are not English. Hardly had you left the house than he started to march all over it; and the first thing he did was to march into my bedroom—my own bedroom, Mr. Stewart. I said to Hepzibah, 'If that young man isn't in my bedroom; I must go and have a talk with him;' and I was just starting off to do it when he came marching down the stairs. Without so much as a word he came straight in here, and into your bedroom; and then if he didn't walk right downstairs into my kitchen and my scullery; and his manner that haughty I might have been the dirt under his feet. 'Might I ask,' I said to him, 'what you're doing in my kitchen?' All he said was, 'It's all so droll—so droll,' over and over again, looking about him all the while for all the world as if he was a broker's man taking an inventory. 'Excuse me,' I said, 'but I'm not used to having young fellows poking their

## The Romance of a

noses into my kitchen, so I'll trouble you to take yourself off upstairs again as soon as ever you can.' He looked at me as bold as brass, speaking to me, as I have said, as if I was the dirt under his feet. 'Mrs. Driver, you're a funny old woman.' A funny old woman he called me, because I objected to his thrusting his nose into my kitchen within half an hour of his entering my house—if those are foreign manners I don't like them. And I give you to understand, Mr. Stewart, without wishing to hurt your feelings, that the sooner your foreign friend with the English name leaves my house again the better I'll be pleased."

"I don't think that in any case Mr. Perkins is likely to stop very long, but if you will endeavour to bear with him while he does stop, you'll be doing me a very great favour, Mrs. Driver. I assure you that he is perfectly respectable; there is nothing about him in the least improper. I admit that his ways may seem a little peculiar; but, I repeat, if you will only bear with him, while he is here, you will be placing me under an obligation which you will find that I shall not forget."

"Of course if you put it that way, Mr. Stewart, there's no more to be said, because there's no one more willing to oblige you than I am; and if it really is obliging you to allow Mr. Perkins to stop in my house for a while, why I'll do my best to put up with it—only I do hope he'll keep his nose out of my kitchen. There's another thing; what am I to do with this parcel?"

Mr. Stewart had noticed that the lady was holding a small brown-paper parcel, to which she now directed his attention.

## Maid of Honour

"What's in it, Mrs. Driver?"

"That's more than I can tell you. It was brought to the house by what I should describe as one of those nasty, dirty Italian boys, with an organ and a monkey, though he didn't happen to have either the organ or the monkey with him at the time. He had the impudence to come up the front steps, and to knock at the front door, as if he owned it; and when I opened it, before I had a chance to ask him what he meant by his behaviour, if he hadn't the audacity to shove this parcel into my hand, saying, 'Give this to the gentleman upstairs,' or words to that effect, because he spoke in what to me was as good as a foreign language. I hadn't a chance to ask him to say it over again, or who he meant by the gentleman upstairs. He jumped down the steps, and ran down the street, and round the corner, like a young deer, and was out of sight in no time. It seemed to me that that was a queer way of delivering a parcel, so as I didn't rightly know who the young scamp—for scamp he was, I'm sure—might mean by the gentleman upstairs, I thought I'd wait till you came in and then give it you."

"You did quite right; if you'll put it down I'll see that it reaches its proper owner. And thank you very much, Mrs. Driver, for consenting to give Mr. Perkins shelter; I'll do my best to see that nothing happens which may cause you to regret it."

Mrs. Driver, withdrawing from the room, left the brown-paper parcel on the table. Douglas Stewart, contemplating it, thought of the promise he had just given her—that he would do his best to see that nothing happened which might cause her to regret Mr. Perkins'



## The Romance of a

presence in her house. He was conscious of a more or less vague suspicion that there might be something associated with that brown-paper parcel which might provide her with very substantial reasons for such regret.

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER XI

### THE VASE

IT was only a small parcel, perhaps three or four inches square, yet Mr. Stewart did not attempt to conceal from himself that he would have preferred, on the whole, not to touch it, or, for the matter of that, to approach it either. He was thinking of what Mrs. Driver had said about the dirty Italian boy, and of his haste to be off so soon as he was rid of his charge; and of the unclean foreigner, with the tousled hair, who had been lurking round the corner, and who had not been there when he returned; and of the little whistle which had heralded his appearance on the platform at Victoria; and of the foreign gentlemen who had favoured him with their attentive glances; and of the well-groomed old gentleman who had made such a strange communication to him in such a mysterious manner. He recalled, also, the emphatic exclamation with which the foreigner, standing behind him, had directed his companion's attention to Mr. Perkins, standing at the railway carriage door. Then there was the man who had persisted in hanging about the entrance into St. James's

## The Romance of a

Park, in spite of the unholy hour. What connection, he wondered, had these things with the disagreeable remarks to which Mr. Wodeski had forced him to listen yesterday afternoon as he left Hyde Park?

On one point Douglas Stewart was clear—he wished to serve the Lady of the Sands exactly in the spirit in which she wished him to serve her, to do her will and to ask no questions. He desired, for instance, that to him Mr. Perkins should be Mr. Perkins and nothing more. Yet if it turned out that all these foreign gentlemen had their eyes on Mr. Perkins, what was he to do? In spite of the well-groomed old gentleman's mysterious hint he did not for an instant believe that they were interested in him, except in so far as he was connected with Mr. Perkins. If they intended to be disagreeable, he had not the slightest doubt that their intentions would be addressed to Mr. Perkins, not to him. Possibly the first expression of their intentions was represented by that brown-paper parcel. In which case what was he to do?

He picked it up. It was light—lighter than he had expected. It was wrapped in a crumpled piece of brown paper, tied about with an oddment of shabby string; the person who had packed it was distinctly an amateur. He raised it to his ear; he had deemed it as being just within the range of possibility that he might hear something like the ticking of a clock; but no, there was not a sound. He shook it; nothing rattled. He pressed it; inside the paper was something hard and oddly shaped—apparently some sort of bottle. He had examined it as thoroughly as he could do without removing the string and the paper; what was he to do

## Maid of Honour

next? The dirty Italian boy had said that it was to be given to the gentleman upstairs, and then had taken to his heels as if fleeing for his life. Should he give it to the gentleman upstairs unopened? He decided in the negative. Although he might not be able to formulate his reasons in black and white he felt that inside that ill-tied package there might be something disagreeable. He would take on himself the responsibility of opening a parcel which was intended for some one else.

He went to the window and looked through it to right and left; then, throwing it wide open, he leaned right out so that he might see farther. There were no suspicious characters in sight, certainly no one who looked in the least like a foreigner. He took the parcel to the open window, and, having cut the string with his pocket-knife, removed the paper. Within was a small vase-shaped object of some sort of dark coloured earthenware, which was so light that its weight was scarcely appreciable to his hand. It was hermetically sealed with a closely fitting cover. The top of this was flat. On it something was scratched as if with the point of a knife. He looked to see what it was. There seemed to be three or four words which were meaningless to him; even the language from which they were taken was strange. Should he take the vase upstairs and ask what the words meant?

No, he would do nothing of the kind. He would open it first, and, if necessary, ask questions afterwards. He began to remove the cap; apparently it was screwed on. He gave it a half-turn. Then, some sudden instinct coming to him, screwing it back, he threw it from him,

## The Romance of a

unopened, as far into the road as he could. When it touched the ground it was broken into fragments, and, as it burst, a sheet of flame leaped up into the air, to a height of perhaps five or six feet, with the roaring noise made by exploding gas—to vanish almost as quickly as it came. So wholly was he taken by surprise, and so almost instantaneous were its appearance and its disappearance, that, after it had gone, he could scarcely credit that he had seen it at all. It was only after a lapse of several seconds that he began to appreciate what had happened, and what was the nature of the peril, which, by providential good fortune, he had escaped.

Probably, by some diabolically ingenious means, the vase had been filled with some kind of volatile gas, which exploded on being brought into contact with the air. Had he removed the cap, while he still retained the vase in his hand, it would have exploded in his face, with consequences which it made him uncomfortable even to contemplate. The chances were that he would have been burnt and blinded, disfigured for life, if nothing worse had come to him. He put his hand up to his eyes as if to shut out from them the possibilities he saw. If the vase had been given to the gentleman upstairs and he had opened it, what would the Lady of the Sands have said to the friend in whom she had placed her whole trust?

While he was endeavouring to dismiss from his mind, at least temporarily, the experience through which he had just passed, some one knocked at the door of his room. Hepzibah Pratt, Mrs. Driver's strapping niece, appeared in response to his invitation to enter. She

## Maid of Honour

was a young woman of five feet eleven, with broad shoulders, black hair, red cheeks, and a practically perpetual smile ; an impersonation of health, strength and good-humour.

"Oh, if you please, Mr. Stewart, the gentleman upstairs wants to know if you are in."

"Does he?" A glance at Hepzibah was enough to tell him that she had been conscious of nothing out of the common. "What is Mr. Perkins doing?"

"Doing? Why, he's eating his breakfast, and a good one he's eating. He's a queer one, Mr. Stewart; he just now wanted to know if I was a girl, and when I told him that I believed I was he said that I was the funniest girl he'd ever seen, but it seems to me that he's a funnier man."

That Hepzibah Pratt was not regarded by Mr. Stewart as an ordinary lodging-house servant this speech of hers showed ; at 13 Brenda Villas the landlady's niece was a person of some importance. Although she might not have been aware of it his smile as he answered her was a little forced.

"I rather fancy that he feels a little like a fish out of water just at present, but you'll find that he's all right. I'll go up to him in half a minute."

Rather more than the actual thirty seconds he had named elapsed before he did ascend to the floor above. When Miss Pratt had gone, going to an old wooden desk which stood on a table against the wall, unlocking it he took from within something which was wrapped in tissue paper to keep it from harm. It was a pencil drawing of a girl's face and head, for an amateur not badly done. He regarded it long and fixedly, and as

## The Romance of a

he looked at it he smiled and even addressed to it certain tender words as if it were alive and could hear. Then he kissed it on the eyes and brow and lips reverently, as one might kiss the picture of some saint. He returned it to its place in the desk. And then he went upstairs.

He found Mr. Perkins eyeing the scant remains of what had evidently been a Gargantuan dish of eggs and bacon. He glanced at Stewart as he entered, with his bright, impetuous eyes, and he said in the crisp, curt tones which the young gentleman found a little jarring:—

“I thought, Mr. Stewart, that you were only to be one or two minutes. Your minutes are long ones.”

“I have been detained longer than I expected. Have you breakfasted?”

“Like a”—Mr. Perkins paused to laugh—“like a king; like a real king, Mr. Stewart. Your Mrs. Driver knows how to feed a hungry man. I have enjoyed worse meals in—in finer houses. And her niece, this Hep—what you call her?—what an extraordinary name! and what a girl! I but reach to her shoulder; what an animal—superb! I love a big woman; she intrigues me, this girl. After all, I think I manage to exist here for a little time. Mr. Stewart, where are the clothes with which I asked you to provide me?”

Mr. Stewart explained that he had wired for a selection to be sent for him to choose from.

“To be sent? But when?—but when? Am I to wait? It is absurd. I have to receive a lady; I wish to go out into the streets; I can do neither in these clothes! Besides, I require a change; it is as if I had

## Maid of Honour

not changed for a month. And then there is another thing—it is most awkward that I have no money. I had no idea that it was so awkward; it seems that without money I can have nothing; I cannot even give a present to this girl who intrigues me. It is incredible! You spoke of getting some money for my ring; I have here another ring—it is most valuable. It has been in my family for some centuries and it is true that I ought not to part with it, but I must have money. I did not know that money was so essential; but now that I do know I must have it."

He was holding out a magnificent ruby which he had taken from the middle finger of his left hand. Without professing to be an authority on precious stones Mr. Stewart thought it possible that that ruby might be worth a king's ransom.

"I don't think that it is necessary that you should raise money on your ring, Mr. Perkins, and I should strongly advise you not to."

"Do I desire to what you call raise money on my ring? Is it to be supposed? You amuse yourself! But since it is necessary that I have money I cannot go to—to certain persons to get it; that is not to be thought of."

"I might let you have some to go on with."

"You can let me have some money? Mr. Stewart, you are a very good fellow. Why did you not tell me so before—when you met me at the station? It would have cheered my heart! How much can you let me have? I hope it is a large basketful."

"I can let you have twenty pounds."

"Twenty pounds?—only twenty pounds? What are



## The Romance of a

twenty pounds, Mr. Stewart? It is not to be generous! I have to go out into the streets; I love to go into all the shops; I love to buy everything I see; I find that it amuses me; you cannot do that with twenty pounds!"

"You certainly can't."

"Twenty pounds! It is a dinner, a supper, and the change to the waiter; I know! I am not so ignorant. However, give me the twenty pounds; it is a packet of chocolate." Douglas Stewart, taking out of his pocket the money which he had won the night before in the very nick of time, proceeded to take from it four five-pound notes. Mr. Perkins surveyed his proceedings with an odd mixture of cupidity and scorn; this was evidently a young gentleman who did not often think it necessary to conceal his feelings. "You have a great deal of money there; give it all to me."

"But it is all I have."

"Well, what does it matter?"

"I am afraid it matters a good deal. If I were to give it all to you you might spend it all before the morning was gone."

"In an hour; in less time! What is money for except to spend?"

"There is no doubt that there is that point of view, but remember that the tailor is sending you some clothes; they will have to be paid for."

"You can pay for them!"

"I propose to out of this. Then there are other calls which I shall have to meet. I am afraid, Mr. Perkins, that you will have to be content with twenty pounds; as you say, it will buy you a packet of chocolate."

## Maid of Honour

Mr. Perkins shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot understand why Miss Chiltern placed in attendance a poor man; I imagine you are a poor man, Mr. Stewart."

"Your imagination has not played you false, Mr. Perkins; I'm about as poor as they make them."

"She must have known that it was a rich man I required. However, since you are poor there is no more to be said; give me the twenty pounds." Douglas Stewart handed over the four five-pound notes. So soon as he had them Mr. Perkins began to behave as if he were a small child in possession of a new toy. "One—two—three—four—hurrah! At last again I have some money! What can I buy with twenty pounds? Tell me, Mr. Stewart—you know more about these matters than I. In London what can one buy for twenty pounds? For instance, can I buy a present for—I cannot pronounce her name—this girl who brought me my breakfast—who intrigues me—this magnificent animal! Ah!" he clasped his hands together, as if with a sudden burst of emotion, which certainly was not speechless. "Then there is Miss Chiltern—that most adorable! Scatterbrain that I am, I omit to bring for her so much as one small token of the storm which rages here!" He struck both hands against his left side with so much force that one wondered if it was not painful. "Oh, Mr. Stewart, what will she think! I must have for her an offering; but what can one have for twenty pounds? It is a sum which a gentleman gives to a footman who has done him a service. Mr. Stewart, I must request you to give me more—twenty pounds are nothing."

## The Romance of a

Mr. Stewart, who was divided between amusement and amazement, would have liked to gratify the peremptory Mr. Perkins; he saw that this was a young gentleman who could do some remarkable things with a basketful of money if he only had it; but circumstances were against him. He had to refuse.

"I have explained to you already, I have given you all that I dare give."

"Then—then in that case it only remains to see what, with twenty pounds, one can buy for Miss Chiltern. I have heard that in London things are to be bought cheap. When I was here before, afterwards they told me that the things I had bought were not cheap—perhaps that was because I was not taken to the cheap places. Mr. Stewart, you must take me to the cheap places; you must see that I get good value for my money—that is a task which I impose on you. And, after all, with twenty pounds for Miss Chiltern one can buy chocolates. Let us go at once! Let there be no delay! Take me at once to the shops where I can find what I require. But my clothes! Am I to remain in these clothes for ever? That tailor of whom you spoke, whom I required you to find, will he never come? Am I to be still unchanged?"

Fortunately Mr. Perkins was not to continue what he called, with so much energy, "unchanged" much longer. That tailor came, in a sort of private omnibus, which seemed full of masculine garments of every description. Douglas Stewart was glad to see him. He had the feeling strong upon him that if Mr. Perkins had had it in his power he would have consigned him to the deepest dungeon long ago, if he had suffered him to keep

## Maid of Honour

his head upon his shoulders. Never had he encountered a being so impatient. Apparently he was accustomed to have, on touching a button, on the instant, everything he wished for. That he should be kept five minutes waiting for the moon was to show dilatoriness on the part of some one which was beyond his comprehension.

Yet the tailor had not arrived very long before Mr. Stewart was inclined to doubt if, to his advent, he would not have preferred consignment to the deepest dungeon of them all. He had brought with him what seemed to Douglas Stewart to be an amazing variety of the most monstrously expensive garments. It was he who inquired their price; such questions seemed not to concern Mr. Perkins at all. With the coming of the tradesman with his goods his mood had changed; he seemed to be really enjoying himself at last. With the lightest-hearted air he seemed disposed to buy everything the fellow had brought. He tried on half a dozen frock-coats and said he would have them all. It was the same with dress-coats, dinner jackets, smoking jackets, overcoats—everything. When Mr. Stewart tried to point out to him that it was not likely that he would require such an extensive wardrobe during his brief stay in town, he pooh-poohed him with the astonishing remark:—

“My good Mr. Stewart, what does it matter?”

To Douglas Stewart it mattered a very great deal. The appreciative young gentleman was visibly inclined towards dressing-gowns at ten guineas apiece and upwards; suits of costly silk underwear; shirts of a quality quite unique; ties, handkerchiefs, socks, gloves,

## The Romance of a

hats, boots, shoes, all of the most expensive kind. Mr. Stewart wished to goodness he had sent his wire to an establishment whose cheapness was its proudest boast. This fellow was frightful! When he proceeded to produce extravagant dressing-cases, which he seemed to think were just the sort of things which a young gentleman would require who was spending a few days in town, Mr. Stewart could endure it no longer. He saw all his capital departing in the villain's pockets.

"My dear Mr. Perkins," he cried, "you don't want a thing like that. A couple of hair-brushes, a razor, a tooth-brush, and that sort of thing, are all you can possibly require."

At the moment Mr. Perkins was examining a gorgeous lizard-skin dressing-case, whose amazing profusion of entirely useless fittings were mounted in solid gold. It was one of those articles which one sometimes sees in catalogues and stores, and wonders what kind of idiot ever buys them. There had been no question of price; Mr. Perkins never asked the price of anything. The salesman was modestly explaining that it was one of those useful trifles which no gentleman could really do without, and his hearer seemed inclined to agree with him, when Mr. Stewart interposed. Mr. Perkins looked at him as if, as he told himself afterwards, he was some lackey who had forgotten his place.

"It is for me," said Mr. Perkins, "to say what I require; it is not for you. I require everything."

Mr. Stewart was on the point of retorting that, in that case, he could pay for everything, when a some-

## Maid of Honour

what surprising interruption prevented what might have been a brisk interchange of remarks. There was an exclamation in a voice he knew—how well! Glancing round, Mr. Stewart perceived, standing in the open doorway, the Lady of the Sands.

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XII

### DOWNSTAIRS

IT hardly seemed the place to receive a lady, or the moment either. Tailor's, hosier's, bootmaker's, hatter's wares were everywhere. Mr. Perkins had on a frock-coat of which he had not yet had time to disencumber himself. He and the salesman were bending over the open dressing-case with gold-mounted fittings; Douglas Stewart, his hands in his pockets, was looking on with an air of almost tearful disapproval; he was so afraid that the departing tradesman would leave him penniless. There certainly was nothing to suggest that Miss Chiltern was expected—a fact which seemed to impress itself upon the lady. She stood in the doorway, wondering what was going on.

She presented such a charming picture—as if she were a visitant from some brighter, more delightful, more ethereal world. She with her youth, and grace, and beauty, gowned and gloved and hatted by those great artists who are never so happy as when they are set to the adorning of a pretty girl. It was such a contrast! The three men, the shabby room, the dainty maid; be-

## Maid of Honour

hind her the "magnificent" Hepzibah. It was Hepzibah who explained, in her own way:—

"This young lady wanted to see Mr. Perkins, so I've brought her up".

And she herself went down. And Mr. Perkins, dropping unceremoniously the gold-mounted fittings he was holding, stood up, very straight, his arms rigid at his sides, brought his heels together with a distinctly audible little click, and bowed, with the head only, with a sudden stiff, yet not unbecoming, dignity, which was in striking contrast with his demeanour of a moment ago.

"Miss Chiltern! This is indeed to honour me."

And the lady, drawing back, favoured him with the lowest and most exquisite curtsy Mr. Stewart had ever seen. She said nothing. Mr. Perkins did not offer her his hand, nor did she seem to expect that he would. Stewart said to the salesman:—

"Be quick!—take these things away!—have up that other man of yours to help".

Between them the three bore down that odd collection to Douglas Stewart's room with a celerity which did them credit. There the young gentleman purchased, and paid for, such articles as he considered might be necessary to Mr. Perkins, and dismissed the fellow with the rest. His ideas were very much less liberal than Mr. Perkins' would have been, and the assistant seemed inclined to press this point a little resentfully; but Mr. Stewart, who was himself not in the sweetest temper, made his meaning so very clear that the man had to depart with as brave a show of contentment as he could muster. As it was the young gentleman regarded the receipted bill he had left behind him with a



## The Romance of a

rueful air, which grew yet more rueful as he counted his remaining cash.

"If this is to continue," he told himself, "very quickly I shall have to have another evening's bridge." In what seemed an uncalled-for burst of rage he dashed across the room, shaking his clenched fists in the empty air. Then he stood still. What was happening upstairs? What business was it of his? What kind of animal was he that, on such a subject, he should allow himself to become curious?—should think of listening? It was true that the woman for whom he would hold the world well lost was closeted overhead with this mysterious foreign lad, who was so obviously masquerading under the ridiculous English name. It was true that she had stolen from the palace; subjected herself to great inconvenience; run all kinds of risks to meet him; that he had apparently engaged in some reckless, dare-devil escapade for the sole purpose of meeting her, and most true it was that they had met. But that, after all, was his—Stewart's—doing. He, at the essential moment, had acted as go-between; had gone out of his way to bring them together; so what was the use of railing at fate because they were together—happy, and he was the most miserable devil on earth—alone?

She had not greeted him. He was the first to see her; it seemed that she had not seen him at all. He and the salesman—comfortable juxtaposition!—might have been invisible as far as she was concerned. If she once glanced his way he had not been aware of it; he believed he would have been. He had looked at her, while he had gathered into his arms as many of the tradesman's goods as they would hold, again and

## Maid of Honour

again, hastily, furtively, doubtfully, longingly; she had never once looked towards him, he was sure of it. She had ignored him as completely as if he had been non-existent. Taking her cue from Mr. Perkins she regarded him no more than if he were one of the lackeys among whom so much of her life was spent.

Indeed no doubt that was how she always did regard him. He perceived that quite plainly then, when he was alone in the mean little room which stood for him for all that there was of home in the world. Had she considered him to be in any sense her equal she would never have set him to play the part which he was playing. She would never have asked Lord Tom This, or the Hon. Dick Theother, or any of her real friends, to play the part of go-between. She would never have dared to do it. They would have considered themselves insulted; Mr. Stewart was inclined to think justly. It was only because she held him to be nothing and no one that she had allotted him so ignominious a rôle. What greater slight can a woman put upon a man than to use him as he was being used? Upstairs was the man she delighted to honour; below was the creature of whose more or less dubious services she stood in need. Beyond the shadow of a doubt there, in a nutshell, was her point of view. He supposed himself to be flattered by her attentions, and had been happy in the supposition, while all the while she had regarded him as a creature who might render her certain services which she could not require of her friends.

What a fool he was! He saw it clearly then. What a poor thing it seemed she thought him. And yet, on such lines was this young gentleman constructed, his

## The Romance of a

sorrow for her was greater than for himself, as he waited, and waited, striving his utmost not to listen to the occasional sounds which were audible above, wondering what he ought to do.

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER XIII

### UPSTAIRS

UNTIL the last of the tradesman's belongings had vanished neither Mr. Perkins nor the lady uttered a sound. They scarcely even moved. The lady remained just far enough inside the door to permit of persons passing; Mr. Perkins continued erect and stiff on the spot on which he had greeted her. And indeed when they were alone, and the door was shut, neither party seemed altogether at ease. This was particularly noticeable in the case of the gentleman, and was probably responsible for the almost preternatural rigidity of his bearing.

"I have to apologise to Miss Chiltern for the apartment in which I receive her."

The lady looked at him, then round the room, with a twinkle in her eyes.

"I imagine that you have not known many like it."

"It is not of myself I think, it is of you."

"Pray, sir, do not allow yourself to be troubled on my account. I have known worse rooms."

He slightly raised his shoulders.

"Which have been transformed by your presence;

## The Romance of a

as, indeed, this room has become changed into all that there is of the most charming—by your appearance. Miss Chiltern, allow me again to thank you for the honour which you do me.”

He moved towards her, this time with both hands held out; she drew slightly back, ignoring the outstretched hands.

“Sir, you have thanked me already.”

“I can never thank you enough.”

“There, sir, I am entirely at one with you.”

Something which was in her words, her manner, the look which was in her beautiful eyes, seemed to take him slightly aback.

“Do not suppose that I am not conscious of the honour which you do me.”

“If you were, sir, you would not be here.”

Her ready retort seemed again to disconcert him, but only for the moment. He was evidently a young gentleman whose tongue was, on the whole, very much at his command.

“It is my desire for the honour which has brought me. I could not stay away.”

“I will not pretend to misunderstand you, sir; but while I imagine that your little pleasure excursion is not generally known to your people——”

“Generally known! It is not known at all!—to any one! I was out for a motor-ride; there was a breakdown in a remote part of the country; while it was being repaired I went for a stroll by myself. I found myself at a railway station; in the station there was a train; I get into an empty carriage; the train starts; I find myself at the frontier; and, after various adventures, here I am.”

## Maid of Honour

"Does the Princess Seraphine know that you are here?"

"The Princess Seraphine? How do I know what she knows?"

"I understand that the Princess is visiting your mother; I did hear that you were to have dined with her last night."

"Now that you mention it I believe I was; what an escape I have had!"

"But will the Princess regard it as an escape, if she is in ignorance of your whereabouts? Had you not better relieve her anxiety by communicating with her at once?"

"Communicate with her? Not—not on any account!"

"Why not, sir?"

"You ask me that!—you can be so cruel!—when I have come all this way, gone through all these adventures to see you?"

"Is it your intention, sir, to pay me a compliment?"

"A compliment! What do I care for compliments? You know very well it is nothing of the kind. Miss Chiltern, we do not seem to understand each other so well as I had hoped. I thought you were the only person in the world who really understood me; and still I hope it. Surely it is not necessary for me to tell you that I am not likely to forget what is due to myself, or to the Princess Seraphine, or to you. But—you do not know the Princess?"

"I have not that honour."

"Well, I will not say a word against her; she is to be my wife; no doubt it is all for the best; but in the meantime I am not yet married. I shall never

## The Romance of a

forget a conversation I once had with you, Miss Chiltern. It was during the short, but delightful, visit which I paid to the beautiful house of your grandfather, the Duke of Horsham. By me that visit, and that conversation, will never be forgotten. I asked you if you would like to be a king; you replied that you thought that you would not. I asked you why; you said that it was because a king never had a holiday. That there never came to him what you called a close time, when he could cease to be a king and become merely a man. I agreed that that was most true; but I answered you that if ever I had a chance I would have a close time, I would have a holiday, a real holiday, in which I would be—a man. You asked what man I would be; I said Mr. Perkins. You remember there was a lively old fellow in the village, of whom they were telling tales, of the name of Perkins?"

"I'm afraid there was; he was not at all a well-behaved person."

"He was not well-behaved—that was what appealed to me. I did not want to be well-behaved; I am sick of being well-behaved; a king has always to be well-behaved. You said if ever I was Mr. Perkins, and had a holiday, you would share it with me."

"You know that I only said it in jest; that I was not serious."

"I know that you were not serious, that you only jested. I also jested. But it was a jest which lingered in my mind. When I found myself in the railway station, with a train at the platform, I said to myself, 'Now is the time for that jest to be played; I will become Mr. Perkins; I will have a close time; I will take

## Maid of Honour

a holiday'. I ask you to play your part of the jest—to share with me my holiday."

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Yet what can be more simple? Here I am in London, without a farthing in my pocket——"

"Without a farthing in your pocket?"

"Stay! Here are the twenty pounds which were given to me by Mr. Stewart!"

"Twenty pounds!—given you by Mr. Stewart?"

"By Mr. Douglas Stewart, the individual whom you requested to be in attendance on me."

"In—in attendance on you? I—I'm afraid, sir, you misunderstand the situation. Mr. Stewart can hardly be said to be in attendance on you; he has not the faintest notion who you are; he believes you to be Mr. Perkins."

"So I suppose, from the way he has behaved."

"How has he behaved? As if you really were Mr. Perkins? But I thought you only wished to be known as Mr. Perkins."

"That is all right, I do not complain; only the misfortune is he is a poor man; why did you not send me a rich one?"

"You—you must pardon me, sir, but you really are a little trying. I had your telegram yesterday afternoon to say you were coming; I was in attendance on the queen all night; had I not early this morning happened to see Mr. Stewart there would have been no one to meet you at all. It is not to be supposed that I can pick out, at a moment's notice, in the middle of the night, a rich man and say to him, 'I want you to meet a Mr. Perkins at Victoria to-morrow morning at six'. At the least he would have asked questions.



## The Romance of a

Mr. Stewart asked none. I can never be sufficiently grateful to him. Besides, what kind of rich man would you have preferred? Would you have liked my grandfather, the Duke of Horsham?"

"The Duke? Oh, my word no! I admit there is truth in what you say; only—about the position there is a delicacy. I have no luggage."

"No luggage?"

"I stroll by accident into a station; I get into a train; what luggage do you suppose I have? The man who was here when you came, Mr. Stewart sent for him; I buy from him one or two necessary articles, for which Mr. Stewart pays."

"Mr. Stewart pays! But, sir, I have no knowledge of his affairs, but I fancy he is even a poorer man than you think."

"He has no money at all; he told me so. See where he has brought me! What a place to receive a lady!"

"It is the sort of place in which a real Mr. Perkins would feel perfectly at home."

"Because one is Mr. Perkins it is not necessary that one should have no money. What can one do with twenty pounds? I have brought you no offering, Miss Chiltern—I own it to my shame; but had you delayed your coming a little longer, with my twenty pounds I would have bought you chocolates."

"Twenty pounds' worth of chocolates! It is well you didn't; I should have had to decline them if you had. Were you really Mr. Perkins you would have known that I could not accept from you so costly a present. How long do you propose to stay in London?"

"How can I tell, since I have not even the money

## Maid of Honour

to buy me a ticket to take me back? I spent all my money on the ticket which brought me here. The only way it seems in which I can get money is to sell my ring."

He held out the finger on which was the ruby ring. The expression which was on her face as she eyed it was eloquent.

"Unless I am mistaken, sir, that is the Italian Ruby!" He nodded. "Any jeweller who would give you anything like an adequate sum for it, if there is such an one, would ask you where you got it from, besides other questions which you might find it extremely inconvenient to answer."

"Then what am I to do? It is so awkward. What I desire above all things is to have a good time; for that it seems money is essential—plenty of money."

"So I have been given to understand."

There was a dryness in the lady's tone which possibly escaped his notice.

"What, in such a position, are twenty pounds? It is all Mr. Stewart tells me he can let me have."

"Is there no one in London to whom you can apply for cash?"

"Beyond a doubt many persons; but not as Mr. Perkins."

"And it is necessary that you should be Mr. Perkins?"

"Miss Chiltern! What is it you ask? So soon as I cease to be Mr. Perkins, my holiday is over."

"It seems to me, sir, if you will forgive me my saying so, that it is not going to be much of a holiday anyhow."

The young gentleman, who was scarcely more than

## The Romance of a

a boy, looked at her with something in his big eyes which was almost like a suspicion of tears. He was silent for a moment or two; when he spoke his voice was tremulous.

"That is a hard saying, Miss Chiltern, since it is the only holiday I am ever likely to have, and it is with so much trouble I have won it. If you only knew how I have dreamed, and dreamed, and dreamed, of the one holiday which, one day, if I ever had a chance, I would surely have, I think you would not be so quick to say it will not be much of a holiday now that I am going to have it. Come, be rather the good friend I have esteemed you, the friend who is to share my holiday. Tell me, how am I to have a good time in London with twenty pounds?"

She sighed, a little sigh, and she looked at him almost as a mother looks at her child, her wayward child, whom she would guard, if the thing be possible, from the perils which beset the path he is resolved to tread. For even the merest chits of girls have in them the maternal instinct which, at times, will out.

"I wish," she said, "that I could talk to you as if you were really Mr. Perkins."

He held out his hands in front of him.

"Why, at this moment there is nothing in the world which I desire more."

"Yes, but if I were to talk to you as if you were really Mr. Perkins I should say things to you which you wouldn't like, and then you'd soon cease to be Mr. Perkins. I know!"

"I beg you, Miss Chiltern, to believe that I am only Mr. Perkins. All else was left behind when, at the station, I found there was a train. Treat me, after

## Maid of Honour

your English fashion, as if we were friends, just friends. To begin, will you not sit?"

"I think, sir, I would rather stand."

"Well? I wait for you to talk to Mr. Perkins."

"Then I will; you shan't be disappointed. I'll talk to Mr. Perkins—exactly as if you were plain Bill Perkins."

"Bill Perkins! That is excellent! I am plain Bill Perkins; now we commence."

"In the first place, Mr. Perkins, you are extremely young."

"I do not think that either of us is ancient."

"I am years and years older than you are."

"Indeed. I learn it for the first time."

"You are likely to learn one or two things for the first time if I do my duty to you; as, for instance, how extremely absurd you are."

"Miss Chiltern!"

"I told you you would not like me to talk to you as if you were really Mr. Perkins."

"But in what sense am I absurd?"

"In every sense; what could be more absurd than your whole behaviour? Absurd is the very mildest word one can use. You, a perfect stranger, come to London without a penny in your pocket——"

"I am not a perfect stranger; I have been in London before."

"Yes, but not as Mr. Perkins. Did you suppose you could pick up money out of the gutter? You come, like the tripper of whom one reads in the funny papers, without—so far as I understand—without even a change of pocket-handkerchiefs. You allow a person whom you have never seen before, but

## The Romance of a

who you know is a poor man, to give you money, to buy you clothes. How, Mr. Perkins, is one to characterise such conduct as that?"

"You adopt towards me a tone of much severity, Miss Chiltern."

"And then your behaviour towards me! You tell me, you who are shortly to be married, that you have come to London, secretly, without anybody's knowledge, especially without the knowledge of your future wife, expressly to see me; under these circumstances you ask me to share with you what you call your holiday? Is it possible that you don't realise how you insult me by such a course of action?—to what peril you expose me? I really believe you don't, incredible though it seems; it is fortunate that I am so much older and wiser than you. I have my duties to perform; my engagements to fill; I must account for every hour to my father, to my brother, to my friends, to my mistress the queen. If it becomes known at the palace that I have come here to have a private interview with a Mr. Perkins there will be an end of Diana Chiltern. There is only one course possible; surely you, young and simple as you are, must see that. You must instantly acquaint your future wife, and your mother, that you are here; and you must return to them at once."

"What explanation am I to offer when I am returned?"

"That is for you to consider; I presume it would not be necessary, in your explanation, to introduce my name?"

"Miss Chiltern!"

"Your question almost suggests that you contemplate

## Maid of Honour

such an eventuality. I foresee all that may happen ; what an idiot I was not to leave your telegram unnoticed, or I should have handed it to my father, to my brother. In itself it was an insult."

"I think, Miss Chiltern, that perhaps you are right, and that I do not altogether care for you to speak to me as if I were plain Bill Perkins."

"Then, sir, I will speak to you as the King of Idalia, and would entreat permission to throw myself on your Majesty's most gracious consideration. When, sir, you were in England before they associated my name with yours, through no fault of mine ; I was a feather-headed simpleton. Already doubtless it is known throughout Europe that you have vanished from your country ; very soon it will be known that you are in London ; you cannot keep that sort of thing a secret. There are those who will say at once that I was the magnet who drew you."

"It will be the simple truth, Miss Chiltern. You were the magnet whose power of attraction would have drawn me to you, sooner or later, even from across the world."

"Do you think that, in saying so, you honour me ?"

"Indeed no ; if you would only understand how conscious I am that it is you who does me honour."

"And if you would only understand how conscious I am that it is you who would dishonour me ! If your presence here becomes known nothing will happen to you——"

"Will there not ? You do not know my mother, still less do you know the Princess Seraphine."

"What a vista you suggest ! The Princess may scold you ; she'll destroy me. She has only to drop a hint at

## The Romance of a

the palace ; there is no woman in England whose plight is worse than mine will be. In England, sir, a gentleman seeks to shield a woman's reputation, not to imperil it."

"And so also in Idalia. Do you not forget, Miss Chiltern, that I am a king."

"No, sir ; I know you are a king."

"A king imperils no woman's reputation ; he places her in a position in which she is beyond the reach of peril. If it is my pleasure, Miss Chiltern, I can make of you a personage before whom the Princess Seraphine will be as nothing ; in Idalia a king is still a king ; I have but to speak, in your presence all the people of my country shall bow their heads. It is for you to say if that word is to be spoken."

After a momentary pause the girl flamed scarlet.

"If I understand you, sir, there is a gentleman in this house who, if he had heard and understood you, would have needed no bidding from me to break every bone in your body, were you ten times a king !"

For an instant or two Mr. Perkins looked as if he were a little startled ; but he was not a young gentleman whom it was easy to disconcert for long. Presently he laughed.

"Perhaps he would not find it so easy to break them as you are kind enough to suppose. Even a king can defend himself."

"Indeed I know it well ; it is only a woman who becomes the more defenceless the more he endeavours to defend her. But, sir, you were good enough to say that you looked upon me as a friend. I would not wish to fall from your Majesty's good graces."

"You could not do it if you tried."

## Maid of Honour

"I thank you, sir." She sank before him in her very lowest curtsy—from the nature of her office there was none more practised in curtsys than she was—and if, in the very reverence she paid him, there was a touch of mischief it was none the worse on that account. "Therefore I would not venture to argue with one who must of necessity be so much more skilled in argument than I am ; I will merely say at the last what I intended to say at the first. Although I am perhaps poorer than Mr. Stewart, if you will undertake to return to-day to the Princess Seraphine, and to your mother, I will provide you with the wherewithal with which to buy a ticket."

"I will undertake to do nothing of the kind."

"How long do you propose to remain in town?"

"As long as I choose."

"Here?—in Walham Green?"

"If I choose ; why not? It is you who have brought me."

"You do well, sir, to remind me of that, since it makes it easier for me to inform you that immediately on my return to the palace I shall feel it my duty to advise the queen that you are here."

"You do not mean it!"

"Certainly I mean it. You cannot think that I shall run the risk of allowing any one to suppose that I am in any way associated with you in your escapade. I shall place before the queen your telegram, and make it quite plain to her that I am not in the slightest degree responsible for your Majesty's singular behaviour."

"In effect, you threaten me?"

"Your presence in London, sir, is a continued threat to me."



## The Romance of a

"You talk of absurdity!—that is indeed to be absurd!"

"If you cannot see that I am right I can only regret it. I must repeat that I intend to do as I have said, and that, for that purpose, I shall return to the palace at once."

"Pardon me, Miss Chiltern, but I shall not permit it."

He interposed himself between her and the door, an action which seemed to afford her some amusement.

"How do you propose to prevent it? By not allowing me to leave the room?"

"I appeal to your generosity."

"I would remind you, sir, that I have already appealed to your common sense in vain."

"If you will give me your word not to attempt to leave the room I will withdraw from the door and give to the matter the consideration which you will yourself admit that it requires."

She seemed to be turning the matter over in her mind.

"I will put it in this way, sir. I will go downstairs and leave you to consider alone; if within, say, ten minutes—I'm sure you won't want longer—you decide to go, well and good; if not then, after ten minutes, I return to the palace."

"Where will you go to downstairs?"

"I have a few words which I wish to say to Mr. Stewart; I can say them while your Majesty is considering."

He regarded her with something in his glance which was not pleasure. It seemed as if he were disposed to give utterance to his feelings in vigorous

## Maid of Honour

language ; then, as if conscious that such conduct might lack dignity, suddenly changing his mind, moving towards the door he held it wide open for the lady to pass.

"I would not wish to detain Miss Chiltern against her will, especially if she has something which she wishes to say to Mr. Stewart."

She made as if to go, then stopped.

"You will let me know downstairs what you decide."

"Miss Chiltern must permit me, under the circumstances, to keep my own counsel."

"Does that mean you're going to stop ? "

"It means that, as I have already said, I would not wish to detain Miss Chiltern against her will."

In his eyes the lady seemed to see something which brought to her cheeks an added touch of colour. In the open doorway she again dropped him her very lowest curtsy, and, without a word, passed down the narrow stairs, he standing straight, and stiff, and silent, as she went.

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE WOMAN WHO KNOCKED AT THE DOOR

AT the foot of the staircase she found Douglas Stewart standing at the entrance to his sitting-room, also with the open door in his hand.

"May I come in?" she asked. He moved aside for her to pass. When she was in it appeared as if she made an effort to smile; if she did the effort was a failure. "I am causing you much more trouble than I meant. Indeed, you are piling up against me a mountain of obligations which, though I never can repay them, I never shall forget."

"If I am able to render you a service I am content."

Apparently there was that in his tone which caused her to glance quickly up at him, then down again, with evident signs of discomposure.

"I—I suppose you can see I'm in a mess. Can't you see? Why don't you speak?"

"You place me in a difficult position. You forbade me to have eyes, or ears, or a tongue; I was to obey, and ask no questions."

"I hope you're not going to be foolish as—as well as

## Maid of Honour

somebody else. I should hope that I have enough of that sort of thing upon my hands already. When I ask you a question I expect you to answer. Can't you see that I'm in a muddle?" He was still. "Oh, you needn't answer. I understand what you mean; you mean that you disapprove of my proceedings. I don't know that you are entitled to do anything of the kind, especially as you have not the least idea of what the position really is; and anyhow it's all his fault—I mean Mr. Perkins'."

"I presume that you are a free agent."

"You do presume. Can't you conceive of circumstances in which you have to do what you don't want to do?—because as it happens I'm not a free agent, really!"

"May I offer you advice?"

"You may offer me anything so long as you don't only look. I—I hate to be glared at!"

"Let me advise you to introduce Mr. Perkins to your father and to your brother."

Her eyes opened wider, as if this was not the advice which she had expected.

"Introduce him? Why, they know him already!"

"Does that mean—pardon me if I presume—that they disapprove of him?"

"Disapprove of him! Mr. Stewart! You—you don't in the least understand."

"Would they approve of your paying him secret visits in his own rooms?" She changed colour. "Now I have offended you."

"No, you—you haven't offended me, only it's so unfortunate that I can't explain. I don't want you to think such things of me——"

## The Romance of a

"Miss Chiltern, do not punish me beyond my deserts! I think nothing of you but what is lovely!"

The sudden warmth of his tone seemed to disconcert her more than ever; she stammered as she went on.

"Still you—you are quite right; I ought to be more careful; and, although I cannot do what you advise, I'll do something else which is equally effective; and I can't help it if he doesn't like it; he's brought it on himself." She glanced at the cheap American clock which was on the mantelpiece. "Mr. Stewart, is that the time? Why, I have to be with the queen almost directly; I'm always being late; I know I'll get into trouble before I've done; the duchess glowered at me yesterday. I must rush! Good-bye! You can't think how obliged to you I am."

She held out her hand; he retained it in his, perhaps unwittingly, while he asked her a question.

"But what am I to do with Mr. Perkins? Are there any orders?"

"Orders!" As she echoed his words she smiled, a real spontaneous smile at last. A mischievous light came into her eyes.

"Yes, Mr. Stewart, there are. I order you to induce Mr. Perkins to return to—to his mother at once—this afternoon—by the very next train. Use any means of persuasion you like; only buy him a ticket, see him off in the train, and wire me 'The goods have been returned'—you'll do something for me for which I'll do something for you one day in exchange."

She was off, through the door, out of the house, into the cab, which had all this time been waiting, without giving him a chance to say another word. When, having watched the hansom drive away, he had returned

## Maid of Honour

into his sitting-room, there came a crash overhead which shook the house.

"I wonder," he said, grimly, to himself, "if Mr. Perkins is breaking up the furniture? I'm to induce him to return to his mother, am I, and to use any means of persuasion which will bring about that desirable end? I'd like—I'd very much like to pick him up, put him in a cab, drive him to the station, pack him in the train, and send him off in it, without going through the farce of asking him what he would like to do; only I don't see how it's to be done without a fuss. This much I do believe, that if he stays in this house only a little longer it'll be the scene of some surprising complications which will make No. 13 Brenda Villas the best-known house in town. What Mrs. Driver will feel like saying to me when all is over is what I should very much like to know. Who's that? She's back again!"

There was a sharp rat-rat on the front-door knocker. Taking it for granted, rather hastily, that Miss Chiltern had returned, he rushed to open, to find he was mistaken. The knocker was indeed a woman, but in no way did she recall Miss Chiltern. She was short, broad, dark-haired, sallow-skinned, and not so young as she had been. Once she had probably been not bad-looking after a fashion; but not only did she belong to a type which ages quickly, but she looked as if she had been suffering from some illness, which had possibly played more havoc with her beauty even than the passage of the years. She was well, though gaudily, dressed, and wore what one could but feel was a superfluity of clothing as if, despite the season, she wished to guard against the cold. Perceiving the mistake he

## The Romance of a

had made Mr. Stewart was about to apologise for having opened when he was struck by the curious way in which the woman was staring at him, almost as if he were some horrible object.

"You!" she gasped, as if she spoke with pain.

Her left hand was pressed to her side; with her right she clutched the railings which divided one house from the next, as if their support was necessary to help her stand. The singularity of her demeanour caused Mr. Stewart to exhibit some slight confusion.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered, "but I thought it was some one else."

Plainly she was endeavouring to regain her self-possession.

"I—I also have made a mistake; it is for me to beg your pardon. I seem to have come to the wrong house. You—you are not Mr. Merton?"

"No, I'm not Mr. Merton; my name is Stewart—Douglas Stewart."

"Stewart? Yes? Douglas Stewart? You are Mr. Douglas Stewart? I ask you to forgive me, Mr. Stewart, for the mistake which I have made."

She descended the steps, as if painfully, and—still as if painfully—moved away along the street. He noticed that she did not attempt to knock at any other door. When he was again in the privacy of his own room he took himself to task.

"Now where have I seen that woman before? I've not a bad memory for faces, and yet I can't place hers. That she's seen me I'll swear, and under circumstances which it gives her no pleasure to recall; she looked at me as if I were some unwelcome ghost. She'd made no mistake; she'd not come to the wrong house;

## Maid of Honour

this was the house where she meant to come ; what she did not expect was seeing me. I wonder who she did expect to see? I'll bet sixpence 'Mr. Merton' was a name she invented on the spur of the moment. The odd thing is that she also was a foreigner."



# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XV

### TWO SCENES

LORD ROFFEY was examining the sit of his tie before a small Venetian mirror which hung against the wall in his son's sitting-room. Father and son were in the Hon. Arthur Chiltern's rooms in Charles Street. His lordship, although obliged to admit that he was fifty, was still in the prime of life, still good-looking, remarkably well-preserved—there was not a grey hair on his well-covered head or in his well-trained moustache; it pleased him to think that he was the youngest man of his age in town. This reflection also occasionally amused his son, though there were moments when he could have wished that his father at least felt a trifle older. A young man of fifty, with good looks and an excellent digestion, is apt to have expensive tastes. His lordship had. And then his conduct was, at times, a little shocking; he could not be persuaded that he was not still at an age at which it was necessary that he should sow his wild oats. It was no use talking to him. His son had tried it once; never again—once had been sufficient. His lordship had surprised his son.

## Maid of Honour

It was certainly a fact that Lord Roffey was not easy to manage, although, possibly owing to what one might describe as his casual outlook on to life, a contrary impression was apt to prevail among those who only knew him slightly. It was not often that he paid his son a call ; his son was wondering what had brought him now. In time he learned—after his father had said a great many things about nothing in particular. It was while he was examining his tie.

“That man Beissmann’s not a bad fellow.”

Mr. Chiltern picked up his cue ; he fancied they were coming to the point.

“In his way.”

“Let me tell you that his way’s not at all a bad one. He’s behaved very well to me.” The son was silent ; he understood what his father meant. “In fact, his behaviour towards me could not have been better ; he has placed me under considerable obligations.” The son believed it ; still silent. It seemed to him that it was a subject on which he could say nothing which his father might not resent. His lordship quitted the mirror. He leaned lightly on his cane, which he held in his left hand, while with his right hand he held to his side his hat. It was a characteristic attitude, one in which he had even been painted. “You know, Arthur, some one ought to present a new word to the English language—one which would stand for the super-superlative of rich. A man with fifty or sixty thousand pounds a year is rich ; I’m given to understand that Beissmann has more than a million—more than a million a year. He’s more than rich.”

“He’s bloated.”

His lordship was pleased to smile.

## The Romance of a

"Possibly; but that's not the word I'm seeking. Compared to Beissmann a man with fifty or sixty thousand pounds a year is a pauper—I'm a pauper."

"And I."

"Exactly—and you. We're both of us paupers, unmistakably paupers. A man like Beissmann is more than rich; he's something in the superlatives; he's the word that's wanting. And I will say this for him, that he's treated me uncommonly well. Arthur, I wish you would talk to your sister."

Though to a stranger the change of subject might have seemed sudden, that was not the case with Mr. Chiltern; he had seen it coming.

"I was talking to her yesterday."

"No doubt; about her frock or somebody else's."

"I don't think that either of us referred to anybody's frock."

"I'll wager that you never said a word to her about what I want you to. You are perfectly well aware, Arthur, that Beissmann would marry her to-morrow if she chooses. I want you to get her to choose."

"Why should she choose?"

"What a question! For a dozen reasons! First and foremost because he could and would give her everything she wants, and more than everything. So far as I know, Beissman is by a very long way the richest bachelor now living. Then I have my own reasons for wishing to see her settled. I may tell you, in strict confidence, that I propose, shortly, to marry myself."

"So it has come to that, has it? Which of them is it to be?"

## Maid of Honour

"That's—that's rather a saucy way of putting it; however I'll admit—still in the strictest confidence—that I've not quite made up my mind myself, though I've resolved that it shall be one of them, and—and within the—possibly within the next few weeks. So you see how advisable it is that she should have an establishment of her own; because while, of course, my home will always be hers, still she mayn't care to live with a stepmother."

"It's possible."

"It's more than possible, as you are very well aware. I don't know how it is, but your influence with Diana has always been greater than mine—I acknowledge it frankly—and so, like a good fellow, use it to induce her to regard Beissmann in—in a proper light."

"You know there's Bob."

"Of course I know it! and Wandsworth's a most excellent fellow! In some respects no one could be more desirable. Still he's not Beissmann."

"He's not. For one thing, he's English."

"English! My dear Arthur, are you going to sing 'Rule Britannia'?"

"There are foreigners and foreigners. Beissmann is a foreigner of a peculiar kind. As you know, stories are told of him."

"Stories are told of him! Arthur! As if stories aren't told of every one. Why, stories are told of me—and very queer stories some of them are." Mr. Chiltern put up his hand to stroke his moustache and to hide a smile; no one knew that better than he did. "It doesn't follow that because stories are told of a man that he won't make an excellent husband! I'm evidence to the contrary. I needn't inform you that I

## The Romance of a

made an excellent husband to your mother, and I'll make an excellent husband again."

"I take it that something depends upon what are the sort of stories which are told. About the Beissman stories there is a peculiar flavour. But I'll not press the point. I only remind you, sir, that, besides Bob, there are others."

"I know. I know—and capital fellows some of them are! Am I not Diana's father? and don't I make it my paternal duty to know everything about my only daughter? I am perfectly well aware that at this particular moment she can have her pick of the basket; that she can practically marry any one to whom she chooses to throw her handkerchief. We Chilterns are all good-looking; it's in the blood; and the girl does us credit. I don't need to be told that London raves about her; of course it does. But at the same time, to—eh—paraphrase Shakespeare, there is a tide even in the affairs of a lovely girl, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. That tide comes once; is at full flood for only a very brief space; and, having ebbed, the odds are that it will never return again. This tide has come to Diana. This is the moment in which she may make the match of the epoch; yes, of the epoch. I don't wish to use exaggerated language, but I repeat it. Why, Beissmann is so keen that he'll make on her any settlement she likes; I believe he'd settle on her half a million a year. Half a million a year! It's stupendous! It's incredible! But it's a fact. The point is that you can't expect the affection of a man like Beissmann to keep a razor edge for ever. He's in the same position she is, only better; he can have any woman he likes, married or single. How many highly

## Maid of Honour

respectable married women are there who wouldn't bolt with him for a fraction of the sum I've named? We've got to look facts in the face. Diana will be left if she doesn't look out. The competition's keen. To say nothing of his having treated me so well, which treatment is likely to continue. It's our duty to do our best for Diana; the best thing we can do for her is to induce her to marry Beissmann; candidly, I believe you only have to speak to her for it to become an accomplished fact."

"What exactly do you wish me to say to her?"

"My dear Arthur, as if it were necessary for me to tell you! You only have to say to her, casually, 'Look here, Di, I really do think Beissmann's a first-rate thing; it'd be a pity to lose it;' you need only press it home a little, delicately, and you'll find she wouldn't lose it."

"Hasn't Mr. Beissmann a tongue of his own?"

"Certainly he has, and he's asked, or tried to ask, again and again. The minx is deuced clever; she fiddle-faddles; keeps him on a little bit of string; manages so that he doesn't know where he is. At this moment he hasn't an idea if she means to have him or if she doesn't. Arthur, he's beginning to feel—eh—piqued; it's a critical moment. He looks, and is entitled to look, to us for our backing, for our support. It is for us to do our duty."

Mr. Chiltern, rising from his chair, took a cigarette from a box which stood upon the sideboard, and with much deliberation proceeded to light it. While his lordship, with visible impatience observed his son, the door was opened by a servant, who announced—

"Mr. Beissmann!"

And Mr. Beissmann entered.

## The Romance of a

It would be perhaps just as well to explain how it chanced that Mr. Beissmann put in an appearance at such an apposite moment.

It is to be feared that the gentleman's temper could not be correctly described as one of the best. Something had occurred that morning to ruffle it, or perhaps his digestion was a little out of order. For one thing, he had seen in his *Times* an account of a great function which had been held the night before, at which the king and queen had both been present. The report mentioned that among those who had been in attendance on the queen was the Hon. Diana Chiltern. The name seemed to have on him a strange effect. He lowered the paper, and shut his eyes, as if to contemplate some mental picture. Reopening his eyes they instantly fastened again on the name in the paper. This happened again and again; it seemed as if he derived some questionable satisfaction from gloating on the lady's name. One says questionable, because his satisfaction, if it was satisfaction, took so singular a form; he kept delivering himself, half aloud, of words which, belonging to some foreign tongue, did not sound as if they were words of pleasantness. A person who was unfamiliar with their meaning might have been excused for believing that, each time he looked at the lady's name, he swore. Presently he hurled the paper from him with what scarcely could have been a blessing—as if he could endure the sight of her name no longer. Rising, he began to search in his pockets, and then about the room—which was a fine room, and magnificently furnished—for something which it seemed he could not find; and the more he could not find it the more he swore. He pressed his finger against the

## Maid of Honour

button of an electric bell. A man-servant answered, who was, like himself, a foreigner. He addressed him in what was unmistakably vigorous language. The man bowed, smiled, went to the table by which Mr. Beissmann had been sitting, moved aside a heap of newspapers, and, picking up a bunch of keys which had been hidden by the papers, held it up in the air. Mr. Beissmann snatched the keys from his hand; he did not thank him; he cursed him instead. The man, who seemed used to his master's little ways, bowed, smiled, and withdrew.

Mr. Beissmann, unlocking a drawer in a gorgeous marqueterie writing-table which stood by a window, took out a small bundle of odds and ends, which was enclosed in a rubber band. It was a quaint collection for a man like him. There were two long white gloves, odd ones, women's; a small knot of white ribbon; what looked like a buckle of a lady's shoe; some faded flowers; a tiny handkerchief; some ball programmes; three brief notes, written in a feminine hand. He scanned these notes as carefully as if they contained matter of the first importance, and as if he did not know them off by heart already. Then, holding them in his fat brown hand, he closed his eyes; as it seemed he had a trick of doing. One might have thought that he was invoking on them, and on himself, the blessing of his patron saint. Still holding the letters he went to where a large framed photograph stood on an easel on a small table all by itself; apparently both the frame and the easel were of solid gold. It was a capital likeness of Diana Chiltern, representing her in the glories of the costume in which she had been presented to the queen. Taking it up he regarded it, for some instants,



## The Romance of a

with an expression which was almost frenzied. Then, replacing it on the easel, he actually knelt on the floor in front of it, clasping his hands, closing his eyes, bowing his head, as if it were the presentment of his patron saint, from whom he craved a boon—and the man-servant again came into the room.

The change which took place in Mr. Beissmann was a striking one. Springing to his feet, he rained on the man a volley of horrid-sounding words. The man merely bowed and smiled. He waited until his master paused for breath, and then observed :—

“There is a lady who wishes to see you”.

“A lady? Send her to the devil! Tell her I am engaged.”

“I have told her. She says she has something to say to you which is of the first importance.”

“I know those women and their important communications! I say tell her to go to the devil! Who is she?”

“It is the Donna Emilia.”

“The——”

Mr. Beissmann stopped as if he really could get no farther. His countenance changed; he seemed to be trembling on the verge of an apoplectic fit; he looked at the man what, for the moment, he could not say. Then he said it. One felt that if language could scorch the fellow would have been shrivelled into nothing. But he only bowed and smiled, waiting for his master to take an instant's rest. Then he held out to him an envelope.

“She desired me to give you this.”

Mr. Beissmann glared at the fellow as if his presumption was beyond conception, then he tore from

## Maid of Honour

him the envelope, rent it open, and read the few words which were on the sheet of paper which was contained within. He hesitated, and re-read them. Tearing the envelope and paper into shreds, he dropped them into a waste-paper basket.

"Bring her."

The servant departed.

When he had gone he re-enclosed the three notes and the other treasures in the rubber band, replaced the whole in the writing-table drawer, locked the drawer, and put the keys in his jacket pocket. He had just done this when the servant opened the door to admit the visitor.

The lady who entered was the lady who had knocked, as she said, by mistake at Mrs. Driver's door, and who had asked Douglas Stewart if he was Mr. Merton. She advanced until she was within a foot or two of Mr. Beissmann and then stood still; indeed, they both stood still and eyed each other almost as if they were two animals who were not upon the best of terms. Mr. Beissmann spoke first. The conversation was carried on in Spanish which, to the accustomed ear, smacked of one of the South American republics.

"You have a courage!"

"Do you not know it?"

"At least it shows that you are still alive—that I have not killed you as yet!"

She put her hands to her side.

"I will tear off the bandages, and will bleed to death here at your feet—if you wish it."

"Bah! None of your fanfaronades! Do I not know you? Why the devil have you come here again? Tell me!"

## The Romance of a

"It is for your sake I have come, not for my own."

"I know it—it is always the same—you are so generous! You think always of me, never of yourself. Why the devil have you come?"

"Ferdinand——"

"Do not address me like that, I advise you."

"Very well, it does not matter to me how I address you now."

"Is it to talk like that that you have come? In that case, out into the street."

He made as if to move towards the bell; she checked him.

"You had better wait and listen. I tell you again that it is for your sake I have come, not for my own."

"Then prove it—and very quickly."

"I understand that you propose to marry, after the form which is used in England."

"I propose to marry; you need make no addition."

"People marry in other countries after the forms which are used in those countries."

"You fool!"

"No doubt I was a fool. I understand that the woman you propose to marry, after the form which is used in England, is Miss Chiltern—the Hon. Diana Chiltern."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know? I know. While a man permits himself to have as many lovers as he likes or can get, he does not allow the same privilege to the woman whom he proposes to make his wife."

"What do you mean?"

"That, as regards Miss Chiltern, you are a little late; she already has a lover of her own choosing."

## Maid of Honour

"You——"

It seemed for a second as if he was going to strike her, then he again moved towards the bell, and again she checked him.

"I will go whenever you please, but for your own sake you had better let me finish. If what I tell you is lies you will be easily able to prove it ; I will place all the means at your disposal. But if it is not lies, is it not as well that you should know that the woman you propose to marry already has a lover? Because, if she begins like that, after she is your wife she will go on."

"What fairy tale have you the courage to invent? Let me hear it ; only let me warn you that I shall not believe it ; I know you."

"If you mean that you know I lie it is you who are a liar ; I have never lied to you in my life."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"What I have to say to you is very simple ; these sort of things generally are. This morning I went to see a person who lives at Parson's Green. As I was returning in a hansom I saw, getting out of another hansom, Miss Chiltern."

"How do you know it was Miss Chiltern?"

"Have I not seen Miss Chiltern a hundred times? I would know her in the dark. Let me continue. Outside the house which she went into was an omnibus which was full of men's clothes—it was a tradesman's omnibus ; a tailor's, his name was on the panel ; I will tell you what it was if you like. I said to myself, 'What can she be doing in such a house at this hour of the day?' It was a small house, a dirty house, a disreputable-looking house, and the neighbourhood is of bad repute ; not the kind of house at which a woman

## The Romance of a

of good reputation would be likely to pay a morning call. I stop my cab round the corner; I get out; I pay him; he drives away; I wait and I watch. I wait a long time—more than an hour. I think, 'What can she be doing all this time?' I wonder. At last the door of the house opens; she comes down the steps with at her side a young man; she has been with him alone in his rooms for more than an hour. He assists her into a cab. As she drives away she leans out, nods, smiles, waves to him her hand; there can be no doubt of the terms on which they are. They have enjoyed themselves together very much."

"You have a fine invention."

"It must be a fine invention, since I can tell the name of the young man and the address at which he lives, for you to make your own inquiries."

"You know his name?"

"I do."

"How did you find it out?"

"When Miss Chiltern had vanished I go to the house; I knock at the door; the young man comes rushing out, all hope and expectation; he thinks Miss Chiltern has returned; when he sees me he is disappointed. I pretend I have made a mistake; that I have come to the wrong house; that I want to see a Mr. Merton. He tells me his name is not Merton, it is Stewart—Douglas Stewart. His address I can tell you for myself—it is 13 Brenda Villas, Walham Green."

Mr. Beissmann seemed to be more struck by the name she mentioned than anything else which she had said.

"What do you say his name was?"

"Stewart—Douglas Stewart."

## Maid of Honour

"Douglas Stewart? Can you describe his appearance?"

"I will try. He is young, perhaps two or three years older than Miss Chiltern; very distinguished-looking, very handsome; with dark brown hair which curls at the edges; big, beautiful grey eyes; smooth cheeks and chin; very clever face—the face of an artist, with an expression the most charming; and a mouth—the kind of mouth which a woman loves to kiss. Altogether a delightful young man; the kind of young man whom no woman would be afraid of finding tiresome."

If this description had about it something which was at the same time both feminine and malicious, her hearer did not seem to notice it. He had turned his back to her, and was turning over some cards which were on a tray in a recess in the mantel. For some seconds he was silent, then he asked a question.

"Had you seen him before?"

There was a perceptible pause before she answered.

"Why do you ask?"

He still kept his back to her.

"Where have you seen him?"

"I did not say that I had."

He turned to her.

"But you have. Where was it?"

"You wish to know?"

"Or I should not ask."

She considered a moment before she gave him the information he required.

"I saw him the night before last in the entrance to the opera while I waited for you; afterwards, when I lay upon the pavement, he leaned over me."

## The Romance of a

He did not seem to be ruffled by her words, only he became a little thoughtful.

"Did he know you?"

"No."

"You are sure?"

"Certain. How is it that you know Douglas Stewart is that man? Is he an acquaintance of yours?"

"It is an odd coincidence. I met him yesterday afternoon in Hyde Park, and again, in the evening, somewhere else. I asked him where I had seen him before. He told me that he had chased me the night before. It is, as I have said, an odd coincidence."

"He may be dangerous?"

"Why?"

"You do not think it may be dangerous that this young man should be Miss Chiltern's lover?"

"Bah! You are silly! These Englishwomen have ways of their own."

"All women have ways of their own. When a young woman, a girl, visits, secretly, a handsome young man, who is not of her own class, and remains with him alone in his apartments for more than an hour, it appears to me that that certainly is a young woman who has ways of her own. Would you like her to continue to visit Mr. Stewart, in the same way, after she has become your wife?"

Whatever her intention the woman's insinuations did not cause her hearer to show visible annoyance. His manner became quieter. He took out a note-book.

"What do you say is Mr. Stewart's address?" She told him; he wrote it down. "I thank you for your information. It may be of use to me, though not in

## Maid of Honour

the way you suppose. I regret the incident of the other night."

"Do not let that trouble you. You have tried to kill me before; probably you will try to kill me again. And I was revenged when Mr. Stewart kissed your Miss Chiltern."

"How do you know he kissed her?"

"How do I know? Inquire of them both. Where a very young girl is concerned a man who has arrived at a certain time of life is sometimes of all fools the greatest. His surprise is very great when, generally too late, he discovers for himself how great a fool he has been. I wish you a very good-day."

She favoured him with no other parting salutation as she left the room; he only glared. He remained for perhaps a quarter of an hour planted on the same spot on which she had left him, apparently turning things over in his mind. Then he paid a call on Mr. Chiltern, which explains his apposite appearance.



# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XVI

### MR. BEISSMANN AND THE MARQUIS

SOMETHING conveyed the impression to Mr. Beissmann as he entered Mr. Chiltern's room that his coming was not so welcome as it might have been. Lord Roffey did his best to persuade him to the contrary. Nothing could have been more genial than his lordship's manner; indeed it was almost effusive. It was the younger man who made him feel that his presence was not, at that particular moment, the thing which he most desired. It is not that he was uncivil—he was perhaps too civil; there is a civility which one resents. But Mr. Beissmann was not one of the ultra-sensitive sort. He had come there with a definite end in view. He was perfectly well aware that the father was on his side—he had good reasons of his own for knowing it—he hoped that, before he left, the son would be with him also.

His lordship in the kindest possible manner broke the ice for him.

"We were just speaking of you, Beissmann." Mr. Beissmann could have sworn it; he felt it in his bones.

## Maid of Honour

"It's a most extraordinary thing. I was just telling Arthur here what a high opinion I have of you, and I was mentioning—incidentally—the conversations we have had with reference to my daughter—to Diana. By the way, I hope that matters in that quarter are progressing as well as you could possibly desire? that you bring good news?"

"I bring no news, and I regret to say that matters are not progressing." He turned to the younger man. "I trust, Mr. Chiltern, that in this matter I may regard you as my friend?"

"In what matter, Mr. Beissmann?"

"I do not think it was necessary that your father should tell you what is the great object of my life; I think that you already knew it. I think you know that if I can only induce Miss Chiltern to do me the great honour to become my wife I shall have gained all that in this world I desire. I know that it is the custom for you English on such subjects to say little. I wish to be as English as you are, but I should like to say a very great deal. However I have not the words. I can only say that if there is anything I can do to make her happy, I will do it. I have money—a great deal of money; I will make any settlements you think proper; she shall have all the money she wants, always, at any time; all those material things which money represents. There is no man living who can, or will, do more for her. Therefore I trust that you will be, in this matter, my friend."

"It depends on how you use the word. In a sense I hope that I'm your friend already, but I fancy that you're using the word in some special sense. Explain yourself more fully."

## The Romance of a

"I want you to plead with her my cause."

Lord Roffey, standing on the other side of the room, caught his son's eye. Mr. Chiltern blew a ring of cigarette smoke into the air and laughed.

"My father was urging me to do exactly the same thing when you came into the room."

His lordship became instantly voluble.

"He's quite right, perfectly correct; I was, as he says, urging him to do precisely the same thing when you came into the room. It only shows, if proof were needed, how much I have your interest at heart. He has much more influence with his sister than I have; I don't know why it is, but he has. A word from him will go a long way—I have cause to know it. I was pointing out to him, what I am sure he knows already, what an excellent fellow you are, how desirable in all respects. And I was saying to him, 'Speak a word to Diana, only one, more won't be required, and she'll at once see what she ought to do, and she'll do it'. And he'll speak to her, I'm sure of it; won't you, Arthur?"

When there was no immediate response Mr. Beissmann pressed the question on his own account.

"Will you do what your father asks, and what I beg?"

Mr. Chiltern blew another ring of smoke and laughed again.

"You are both of you placing me in a very delicate position—I don't half like it. In the first place, Mr. Beissmann, let me tell you quite frankly that you're very far from being the first person who has asked me to perform for him a similar office."

His lordship interposed.

## Maid of Honour

"Of course, we take it for granted ; since—as our friend here knows perfectly well—the whole world is after the girl and will leave no stone unturned to get her. But here the case is on a different footing ; it is I who ask, it is your sense of what is right and proper which prompts you. You wish your sister well ; you want her to be happy, to have all those things which will make her happy, and—and you know that Beissmann will give her all those things. Beissmann is on a plane of his own ; you can do for him what you could not do for anybody else ; and you will do it—I'm sure of it—for your sister's sake, for your own sake, for my sake, for all our sakes."

His lordship was almost tearful ; his son was unmoved. Mr. Beissmann put what was very like a leading question.

"Have you already pledged yourself, Mr. Chiltern, to any one, that you will try to induce your sister to become his wife?"

"Pledged is a strongish word, but I've spoken a good word for heaps of men. I've said, 'Di, Tom's very far gone ; he's a decentish sort of chap' ; and when she's observed that she didn't think that he would make a bad husband for one of the nicest girls she knows, I've passed on to Dick and Harry. In fact things have come to this stage that whenever I look a bit serious she says, 'Arthur, you've got a husband in your eye ; please let him do his own wooing'. That is the advice I offer you, Mr. Beissmann ; do your own wooing. I assure you that my sister is not the kind of girl who's to be wooed and won by proxy, and, for my part, I don't blame her for it either."

"Is one of the gentlemen on whose behalf you have

## The Romance of a

spoken a good word to Miss Chiltern Mr. Douglas Stewart?"

"Douglas Stewart?" echoed his lordship. "Who's Douglas Stewart?"

"He's a gentleman I met here last night, with whom I played bridge. Is Mr. Stewart one of the fortunate men to whom you have alluded, Mr. Chiltern?"

"I don't think you're entitled to ask me such a question, Mr. Beissmann."

"Arthur, who's Douglas Stewart? I don't remember ever to have heard the man's name."

"For any information, sir, respecting Mr. Stewart I am afraid that you must apply elsewhere."

"Then why, Beissmann, do you specifically mention the fellow's name?"

"Mr. Chiltern considers that I am not entitled to put to him the question, which he has not answered. I am of a different opinion. I am open and above-board. I announce clearly that I offer myself as a suitor for Miss Chiltern's hand. I think, therefore, that I am entitled to be told if the lady has entered into any engagement already."

"Entered into any engagement? Diana? I can answer that; I can assure you that she has done nothing of the kind."

"I hope that your lordship will forgive me, but I should like to receive that assurance also from Mr. Chiltern. Is there, to your knowledge, Mr. Chiltern, any engagement, either expressed or implied, between Miss Chiltern and Mr. Douglas Stewart?"

"Arthur! What's he driving at? Who is this man Stewart?"

"I saw him for the first time in my life yesterday

## Maid of Honour

afternoon, and that was also the first time I ever heard of him."

"Then, Beissmann, what do you mean by asking such a question?"

"I think you will allow that I have good grounds when I tell you that this morning Miss Chiltern visited Mr. Stewart in his bachelor lodgings at Walham Green, and remained alone with him in his room for more than an hour."

"Beissmann! What—what's that you say?"

"I put it that, on the face of it, such conduct suggests that there is an understanding between them."

"Never mind what you put, I ask it what it was you said."

"I repeat it. It is not necessary for your lordship to look angrily at me. I make a plain statement, because I consider that I have a right to know if Miss Chiltern is still free to listen to the proposals which I hope to have the honour to make to her. Allow me—I go on. I say that this morning Miss Chiltern visited Mr. Stewart in his lodgings at Walham Green, and was alone with him in his private apartments for more than an hour; and I add that she is hardly likely to have done a thing like that unless there is an understanding between them of one kind or another."

"And I say you're a damned liar. I beg your pardon, Arthur, for cutting in before you, but, as you know very well, this is a game at which I've a right to take a hand, and so I take it. Hope your lordship's feeling up to the mark to-day, because in that case you'll like to join me presently in throwing Mr. Beissmann out of the window. Mr. Beissmann, what the something do you mean by the infernal falsehood

## The Romance of a

you've just uttered? Better climb down before I skin you."

These somewhat vigorous remarks proceeded from the Marquis of Wandsworth, who had entered the room unannounced and unnoticed at an apparently unpropitious moment. The three persons who were in the room regarded him as if, on the whole, they rather wished he had not come. While his lordship was allowed, by those who knew him well, to be that curious thing, "one of the best fellows in the world," it could not be denied that he was apt, on slight provocation, to use language which, to put it gently, was stronger than the occasion seemed to need. Nor did he always confine himself to words. Piquant stories were told of fistic encounters in which he had engaged at—and sometimes without—a moment's warning, and from which he had not always emerged with the honours of war. He was one of those—nowadays exceptional—individuals who, in certain moods, liked a row for the row's sake, as if incidents of the kind served as safety-valves for his overheated feelings. It was known to each of the three gentlemen on whom he had so suddenly intruded that, for some time past, his emotions had been somewhere in the neighbourhood of bursting point. His sentiments towards Miss Chiltern were public property, as, indeed, most of his sentiments were wont to be. Reticence was not a quality of which he was much enamoured. That "Bob" Wandsworth was "after the Chiltern," and that he would not rest until he had her, everybody knew. It was at least as well known that the hunted probably found the chase more amusing than the hunter. And that, in consequence, the impetuous swain was disposed to pick

## Maid of Honour

a handsome quarrel with any one who showed the slightest disposition to follow the same quarry, was the cause of much amusement to those who were least concerned.

Mr. Arthur Chiltern had good reason to know that few things would please his lordship better than the chance of coming to what he called an "understanding" with Mr. Beissmann. Only the night before he had remained after his fellow guests had departed for the express purpose of informing Mr. Chiltern that, as regards Beissmann, it was his intention before very long, as he phrased it, "to comb his hair". So soon as he saw who the speaker was and heard the words he uttered Mr. Chiltern recognised that, in his lordship's judgment, the moment for that mysterious process had now arrived. He made up his mind that, if he could help it, no nonsense of the kind should take place in his rooms.

Before Mr. Beissmann, taken by surprise, could reply to the other's strenuous observations Arthur Chiltern answered for him.

"I would remind you, Wandsworth, that you are in my rooms, uninvited. Since I am responsible for what is said in my rooms, and not you, I must ask you to apologise to Mr. Beissmann."

"With pleasure, after I have had a talk with him; but I am going to talk to him first. I heard him talk like a blackguard about a lady. For that I'm going to break his neck. I'll beg his pardon afterwards."

Mr. Chiltern, maintaining his ground, prevented the speaker from approaching too close to Mr. Beissmann.

"The lady in question is my sister. I am perfectly competent to defend her, thank you, Wandsworth. In



## The Romance of a

any case I am not aware that you are entitled to interfere. What I hinted to you last night, I now say plainly. You have no right to associate yourself with my sister, or with my sister's name, in any way whatever. Speaking on her behalf I must request you not to do so, either now or at any other time."

His father supported him.

"Quite right, Arthur, perfectly. I'm surprised at you, Wandsworth. Essentially, where my daughter is concerned, your position is that of a perfect stranger."

"Is it? You didn't use to talk like that before Beissmann came upon the scene, and, before very long, you won't talk like that again. Since you wish it, Arthur, I'll put off breaking Beissmann's neck till I meet him outside; if he likes I'll call at his own rooms and do it there. But lest there should be any misunderstanding, which I'm anxious to avoid, I repeat that he's a damned liar, and that what I heard him say proves that he's an infernal blackguard, and I'm ready to translate my words into actions at any place or time he chooses to appoint."

Mr. Beissmann spoke.

"I assure you, Lord Wandsworth, that the opportunity you desire shall be given you at the earliest possible moment. Lord Roffey, I need not tell you that I intended no reflection on Miss Chiltern. The fact that it is my hope that Miss Chiltern may honour me by becoming my wife——"

"Your wife! If you are not careful, Beissmann, I'll start on you at once."

Mr. Chiltern interposed.

"Wandsworth, if you can't behave yourself I shall have to ask you to leave my room."

## Maid of Honour

"Behave myself!"

"Yes, behave yourself. You know me, Bob, and therefore you'll understand what I mean when I ask you not to be an ass."

The Marquis looked as if he could have said and done a good many things, and as if he would like to say and do them; but something which he found in Chiltern's half-laughing eyes induced him to put some slight restraint upon himself until some, possibly not distant, occasion.

Beissmann went on, avoiding, with better manners than the Englishman showed, as much as he could, any bone of contention.

"I simply state that Miss Chiltern paid a long visit to Mr. Douglas Stewart this morning in his rooms, and I ask if that implies that Mr. Stewart has pretensions which will render it necessary that I should withdraw my candidature. That the fact I have stated is a fact can easily be proved by referring to Mr. Stewart. What explanation he has to offer I cannot say."

"But I'll find out. Where does the beggar live?"

This was the Marquis.

"Mr. Stewart's address is 13 Brenda Villas, Walham Green."

"Then since it seems, Beissmann, that the pleasure of talking to you is to be postponed, I'll go and talk to him. I didn't like the fellow's airs and graces yesterday; if there's a grain of truth in what you say I'll break his neck by way of a beginning."

The Marquis turned to leave the room; Mr. Chiltern tried to stop him.

"Wandsworth! Where are you going?"

## The Romance of a

"I'm going to 13 Brenda Villas, Walham Green. Have you any objection?"

"I've a very great objection." His lordship used some very strong language indeed, as to the quarter to which his objection might be consigned, and banged the door in Mr. Chiltern's face. Perceiving that it would be useless, without provoking an unpleasant scene, to try to stop him, Mr. Chiltern had to let him go. He turned on Mr. Beissmann with not unnatural warmth. "Why on earth did you give him the man's address? Now, quite possibly, there'll be a scandal."

"Why? Is it not likely that Mr. Stewart will be able to offer an explanation which will be satisfactory even to the Marquis of Wandsworth? In order that there may be no doubt why should we not go also and request Mr. Stewart to explain to us?"

"Explain! There's nothing to explain! The suggestion's an impertinence to Diana!"

Lord Roffey intervened.

"I'm not so sure, Arthur, that you're right. I'm inclined to agree with Beissmann. Mr. Stewart seems to be playing such an unexpected part in my family affairs, that I should rather like to learn what manner of man he is; so, Beissmann, if you're disposed to go, I'm with you."

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE AMBASSADOR

MR. BERTIE COTTRELL'S card was brought to the Idalian ambassador at a moment when he was little inclined to receive visitors. With the aid of his first secretary, Don Miguel da Costa Espartero, he was deciphering a telegram which had just arrived from the Idalian capital. It was from the Idalian chief minister, and was in so secret a cipher that the only persons who had access to the key were the ambassador himself and his first secretary. It was a cipher which was only used on rare occasions, and then only to convey information which was not only of the greatest importance, but also, from a diplomatic point of view, of the extremest delicacy.

When, after some labour—the cipher was such a very complicated one—the ambassador and his secretary had unravelled the puzzle, and the meaning of the telegram was plain in front of them, such a meaning as it had, it would have been difficult to say which of the pair was more surprised. The telegram was a long one. First the ambassador read it to himself; then

## The Romance of a

the secretary read it to himself; then, at his chief's request, the secretary read it aloud; then the ambassador read it to himself again; then each stared at the other in bewildered amazement.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed the ambassador.

"Astounding!" agreed Don Miguel.

"It can't be!"

"One would have said so."

"Altogether incredible!" The ambassador referred again to the decoded telegram. "His Majesty has vanished! Vanished? What can Castelnova mean?"

The Marquis de Castelnova was the Italian chief minister, from whom the telegram had come.

"That's the point; what can he mean?"

"His Majesty went for an excursion into the country on his automobile, and, at a secluded spot near—what's the name of the place? never heard of it!—while the car was undergoing repairs, his Majesty went for a short stroll, from which he has never returned. That short stroll would appear to have been a long one." Don Miguel smiled diplomatically. "This occurred the day before yesterday, and nothing has been seen or heard of his Majesty since. This is—this is incomprehensible."

"Entirely."

"The position is complicated by the fact that it is advisable to keep the news of the king's disappearance from the queen mother and the Princess Seraphine, for reasons which I shall probably surmise—I don't know why Castelnova should say that."

"Well, one may hazard a guess."

The secretary looked at the ambassador, and the ambassador, through his glasses, looked at the secre-

## Maid of Honour

tary. One should not speak lightly of dignitaries; but after they had regarded each other in silence for some seconds, something in the expression of their countenances conveyed the idea that, figuratively, each of the gentlemen had winked. Señor de Miranda—that was the ambassador's name—shook his head, and he observed, as if the silence had been eloquent:—

“I suppose so! I suppose so! Most unfortunate! Most unfortunate! Castelnova goes on to remark that it becomes momentarily more difficult to keep the fact of the king's disappearance from these ladies, which is sufficiently obvious. Indeed how he has managed to keep it from them for so long is beyond my comprehension—knowing these ladies as we do.”

“Precisely; knowing them as we do.”

“It was quite unnecessary for him to add an intimation that I am to regard what he says as strictly confidential.”

“It would seem as if he were growing desperate, since it is evident that he has only told you now because he dare not keep the news to himself any longer.”

“I wish he had dared, or else that he had chosen to be more explicit.”

“It is a message which one reads twice for itself and twenty times for what is between the lines.”

“What is between the lines? That's the question.”

Again the two gentlemen eyed each other for some moments without speaking, and again one wondered if they had winked. Señor de Miranda stroked his nose with the edge of the telegram.

“It's a most serious position,” he remarked.

“Most serious,” admitted Don Miguel.

It was while the pair of diplomats were in this state

## The Romance of a

of perfect agreement that an under-secretary brought in Mr. Cottrell's card. The ambassador glanced at it.

"Mr. Cottrell? At present I am engaged. Is there no one to whom Mr. Cottrell can tell his business?"

"Mr. Cottrell says that he has something to tell you which is of the first importance, and which is for your private ear alone."

The ambassador exchanged glances with Don Miguel; then he said:—

"Show him in"

The instant that under-secretary had gone the ambassador bundled the cipher telegram, the translation, the key, and other documents, into a drawer, which he locked. He was dictating from a paper which he had picked up haphazard from the table, and the secretary was taking down his words, both gentlemen wearing an air of portentous solemnity when Mr. Cottrell appeared.

We have met Mr. Cottrell before, in the shape of the silk-hatted, well-groomed, elderly gentleman, who, while promenading carelessly up and down the platform of Victoria Station, had managed to convey that mysterious warning to Douglas Stewart. Wearing the same air of having just come out of a bandbox, he was greeted both by the ambassador and his secretary as if he was something more than an old acquaintance.

"Mr. Cottrell, this is unexpected; but to see you is always a pleasure."

"You are engaged?"

"At the moment, yes. But as I am told that you have something to say to me which is of interest——"

Señor de Miranda left his sentence unfinished. Mr. Cottrell, sitting down, concentrated his attention on the interior of his hat.

## Maid of Honour

"Exactly. It continues to be fine and seasonable weather."

The allusion to climatic conditions seemed to take the ambassador a little by surprise. Then he glanced at Don Miguel and smiled.

"The hint is intended for Espartero? It is unnecessary. Espartero and I are one. Speak to me as if he were not here. I prefer it."

Reversing his hat Mr. Cottrell touched the crown lightly with his finger-tips. Then he asked, as if he were putting a casual question :—

"Is your Excellency aware that the King of Idalia arrived in London this morning?"

His Excellency was not aware of anything of the kind. So little was he aware of it that when he heard the question he had some difficulty in preventing himself from jumping from his seat. But he had been trained in a school whose pupils were taught never, if they were surprised, to show it, and to act as much as possible on the lines which M. de Talleyrand is supposed to have laid down when he is credited with the statement that words were given us to conceal our thoughts. For a second or two it was all he could do to keep his face, manner, voice, expressionless; then he said, in the most matter-of-fact tone :—

"Already?"

Mr. Cottrell glanced quickly up at him.

"You knew that he was coming?"

"Mr. Cottrell asks a delicate question."

Mr. Cottrell rose from his chair.

"In that case I won't detain you. I thought I was bringing you news. I didn't know that you expected him. Good-day."



## The Romance of a

The ambassador put out his hand to detain the impetuous gentleman.

"Pardon; one moment, Mr. Cottrell. There is a little misunderstanding. What you tell me is, in fact, news. I was not aware that his Majesty had arrived already."

"I thought you weren't."

Mr. Cottrell looked at the ambassador with a significant directness which the diplomatist countered with an expressionless smile.

"You place me, not for the first time, Mr. Cottrell, under a considerable obligation. You will therefore the more readily forgive me if I ask how you know that his Majesty is in London?"

"I've seen him."

"You are sure it was the king?"

"Have I wasted my whole life? Your Excellency forgets. I would recognise a European royalty, even to a cousin in the sixteenth degree, in the thick of a London fog."

"That is indeed to claim something. But no one is better acquainted with Mr. Cottrell's qualifications than I am. Where, Mr. Cottrell, did you see the king, and when?"

"I saw him get out of the boat-train which arrived at Victoria at something before six this morning. He wore a motor overcoat and a motor cap, and looked as if he had just jumped off his automobile."

The ambassador and the secretary looked at each other furtively, one might almost say uneasily. Señor de Miranda leaned across the table.

"I will be frank, since I cannot help it; what you tell me, Mr. Cottrell, takes me wholly by surprise. To

## Maid of Honour

earn my undying gratitude you have now only to inform me where at present his Majesty is."

"That's just what I can't do. I wondered if you knew."

Not even the ambassador was able to conceal the perturbation which the reply occasioned him.

"Will you be so good as to tell me how much—or how little—you saw of the king?"

"Suppose you let me tell the story my own way. In several respects it's an odd one."

"If you will be so kind ; I am all attention."

"I was going to meet some friends of my own. Directly I got into the station I perceived that something was in the air. On the platform were several individuals whom I recognised as members of a revolutionary society which, though it chooses to remain anonymous, is known, by its works, as well in Idalia as in other countries. While I wondered what those gentry were doing there, and had a mind to bring them to the attention of the police—for when they are gathered together there is mischief brewing—I heard a signal given which I have very good reasons for knowing well ; it meant that some one was near of whom particular notice was to be taken ; and it is not good for any one to be much noticed by the members of that amiable society. I looked to see if I could discover who the individual was to whom this compliment was to be paid. As I turned a young man strolled past me who I have no doubt whatever was the person in question. Whether he was, or was not, conscious of the interest he created I cannot say ; I have asked myself more than once since, and am still in doubt. He certainly showed no sign of consciousness ; but I have been putting one and

## The Romance of a

one together, and am inclined to think that he was a young gentleman of much sangfroid. Presently the train came in. As I was looking for my friends I saw, standing at one of the carriage windows, the King of Idalia. I saw him alight as the train stopped, and then who should come marching up to him, greeting him as if he were his most familiar friend, but my young gentleman. They walked off together side by side; and as I was about to follow to see what became of them, for the whole incident intrigued me greatly, my arms were seized from behind, and—there were my friends. They engrossed my attention for several seconds; when I looked again the king and his companion had gone.”

“And that is all?”

“That is all.”

“These individuals of whom you have spoken, they did nothing?”

“So far as I know, not then. It is, however, I imagine possible that they propose to do something a little later.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Is it not obvious that, if no one else knew, they knew that his Majesty was coming to London, and even who would meet him? which explains their interest in the young gentleman. You are aware that they have already made one attempt against the king in his own capital; is it not possible that they may be hoping that a second attempt in London may be more successful? You know how he was guarded when he was here before. Who can say what sort of guardian this young gentleman may be? For all we can tell he may be defenceless; at the mercy of the first cut-throat who comes along.”

## Maid of Honour

"You speak very lightly of dreadful possibilities, Mr. Cottrell. You have a wide knowledge of men and faces. Did you not recognise this mysterious young gentleman?"

"I did not. He was a stranger to me. I had never seen him before."

"You are certain?"

"Absolutely."

"Was he a gentleman?"

"Yes—and a good-looking one; but his clothes were a little shabby, and not quite of the latest cut. Possibly a painter, or even an actor, or something of the kind—still in the struggling stage."

"Was he English?"

"Undoubtedly; I should say a Londoner. But I'll not only describe him to you minutely, I'll show you his portrait. As I have said, the whole affair interested me greatly; and, following a habit I have formed, so soon as I was alone I made some pencil sketches of the chief characters. I've a knack for catching a likeness; and, although they are from memory, I think I can guarantee they're pretty accurate. Here they are." He laid some sheets of notepaper on the ambassador's table. "There's the king as I saw him looking out of the carriage window."

"There is no doubt about the accuracy of that likeness; that is certainly the king."

"And here is the young gentleman who met him."

Having attentively examined the sketch himself the ambassador handed it to Don Miguel.

"Do you know him?"

The secretary shook his head.

"Not in the least."

## The Romance of a

"Nor I. This is indeed mysterious. Mr. Cottrell, with your permission I will say a word to Espartero, and will presently rejoin you."

Señor de Miranda and his secretary both rose from their seats.

"If your Excellency will permit me," said Mr. Cottrell, "I see that you have a telephone. While you are speaking to Don Miguel I will use it to say a word to the people at Scotland Yard, and also at Victoria. You are probably aware that it is the custom at all London termini to have a policeman on duty, who receives from all cabs which leave the station conveying passengers the address to which they are going. If we find out what were the addresses to which travellers by the boat-train were driven we have at least learnt something."

The ambassador being at one on this point with Mr. Cottrell, while, in the deep embrasure of one of the windows he whispered a few private words into his secretary's ear, that gentleman was using the telephone for the purpose he had mentioned. When the ambassador returned to the table he was carrying on what seemed to be a one-sided conversation with some one who wanted to know if the parties he was in search of had left the station in a hansom. As he switched off the connection and was replacing the receiver Señor de Miranda inquired:—

"Any definite result, Mr. Cottrell?"

"Not at present. They are making inquiries and will let us know the addresses possibly in a minute or two."

"In that case will you ask them to communicate with me at the Foreign Office, where I am going at

## Maid of Honour

once. Don Miguel is of my opinion that the first thing to be done is to see the Foreign Secretary; to place before him the position as we know it, and to invoke his kind assistance. If you will do us the honour to accompany us, Mr. Cottrell?"

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE FOREIGN SECRETARY

VISCOUNT POOLE, who was at the moment Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was about to leave the Foreign Office for the House of Lords when word was brought to him that the Idalian ambassador begged the favour of a few minutes' private conversation. Señor de Miranda was ushered in, and presently the viscount was in possession of the story Mr. Cottrell had brought. His lordship looked the surprise he felt.

"Your Excellency must forgive me, but what possible motive can his Majesty have for"—a pause suggested that, meaning to say one thing, he changed his mind and said another—"coming to London in such a fashion?"

The ambassador leaned towards the minister. The pair were alone together; Mr. Cottrell and the first secretary had been left outside.

"May I take it that your lordship will regard anything I may say to you in the strictest confidence?"

"You may."

The ambassador looked round as if he feared that

## Maid of Honour

the walls had ears ; then he spoke in an undertone which, in case they had, must have been inaudible even to them.

"Your lordship will please to understand that I do not profess to state exact facts, but am merely advancing a hypothesis of my own." He paused to glance round again and to continue in still lower tones : "I conceive it as being within the range of the possible that something may have transpired between his Majesty and the Princess Seraphine which may be regarded in the light of a transitory misunderstanding".

"I've understood that the princess has a temper."

The Englishman's bluntness seemed to shock the diplomatist.

"Beyond doubt the princess has a high spirit, which is only fitting."

"Beyond doubt."

"I need not inform your lordship how essential it is, in the present state of affairs in Idalia, that the king should marry at the earliest possible moment ; nor need I tell you that the alliance with the Princess Seraphine has only been arranged after many difficulties have been overcome."

"As you say, I am cognisant of both these facts."

"It is not conceivable that anything could prevent that alliance having a satisfactory issue, otherwise the consequences might be exceedingly serious not only to ourselves but to others."

"Admitting that these things are so, I don't see what they have to do with his Majesty's presence in town."



## The Romance of a

"I don't say that they have anything to do with it; not the least. I suggest nothing of the kind. But to illustrate what a curious thing gossip is, how wholly irresponsible, I should like to tell your lordship a ridiculous story which has lately reached my ears. While its absurdity is obvious, it is not unamusing. This ridiculous story has it that the Princess Seraphine recently found in a pocket-book which the king had left upon a table a portrait of a lady, who was not herself. The story pretends that the princess questioned the king as to the lady's identity, and, as she did not find his answers altogether to her liking, there was what you, in England, call a little tiff. It was a mere nothing, and was forgotten in a moment. The silly story goes on to say that, a few days later, the king was standing very close to the princess. She took hold of a locket which was hanging from his watch-chain. It seems that she gave him such a locket containing her portrait. She supposed this locket to be that one. However, she was mistaken, because, on opening it, she found that the portrait it contained was not hers but that of the lady whose photograph was in his Majesty's pocket-book."

The ambassador paused. After a momentary silence the minister said :—

"Whereupon the princess asked more questions".

"She not only asked questions, she said things—so the story goes. I now approach the point. The lady of the locket and of the pocket-book was an English lady."

The viscount, leaning back in his chair, looked up at the ceiling, apparently unconscious of the fact

## Maid of Honour

that the ambassador was eyeing him with the keenest scrutiny.

"And the inference is that his Majesty has left his future bride, almost at the steps of the altar, to rush over to London to have a little conversation with an English lady; is that so?"

"It is whispered that the princess wrote a letter to her Majesty of England, which the queen mother had the greatest difficulty in keeping her from sending. Matters have reached such a crisis that, if the king has come to see this lady and the princess discovers it, then I do not exaggerate when I say that it's quite possible that we are in measurable distance of a European war."

"What is the lady's name?"

"That we do not know; part of the trouble was caused because his Majesty refused to say. Doubtless it is a connection which he formed during his English visit; your lordship should know more about it than I do."

"What sort of person was it who met him at Victoria?"

"As regards his appearance I can inform your lordship to this extent."

The ambassador placed Mr. Cottrell's pencil sketch before the minister.

"Capital! Cottrell does this sort of thing very well. But this represents an individual who is certainly as complete a stranger to me as you say he is to you." The minister stood up. "I ought to have been in the House half an hour ago; I'm afraid you must let me go. I will keep carefully in mind what your Excel-

## The Romance of a

lency has said. I trust that we may shortly be able to inform you where his Majesty is at present residing. I don't think you need anticipate trouble from Mr. Cottrell's revolutionary friends; those sort of gentry don't perform in London; they let off their fireworks in more favoured cities. As regards the lady, I am sure Princess Seraphine need fear nothing on her account; no one his Majesty met in England will cause him to waver in his allegiance for a single instant."

When, at last, the ambassador and the minister parted, and his lordship had given certain instructions to the secretary who was in attendance, instead of going straight to the House of Lords, as, considering he was so late, one might have supposed he would have done, Viscount Poole paid a call at Horsham House, which could hardly be said to be on his way. Marching into a small apartment which opened off the entrance hall, he asked the servant to tell the duchess that he would be obliged if she would come to him at once, as he had something which he particularly wished to say to her. And, almost instantly, the duchess came.

As all the world knows, she was the duke's second wife, and very many years his junior. Her predecessor had died childless, while she had already gladdened her liege's heart by presenting him with an heir. While not, perhaps, strictly beautiful, she was good to look at and even better to live with. The popular voice had it that she was one of the most charming and clever of the duchesses. Viscount Poole who, while not much older than the duke, was more than old enough to be her father, was one of her innumerable cousins; there

## Maid of Honour

were so many of them that she did not pretend to keep count of them all. She and the viscount were on excellent terms, as her manner of greeting him suggested.

"Now who's set the Thames on fire?"

"You have."

"Pray how?"

"By having people to stay with you who do that kind of thing."

"Perhaps you'll explain?"

"You're one of the few women I know who can keep a secret."

"I expect you say that to every woman to whom you're going to pretend to tell one."

"Anyhow in your case I mean it. Will you keep locked in your bosom what I am going to say to you—even from Horsham—unless I give you permission to unlock?"

The lady looked right into his eyes, perhaps to see if he was in earnest. When she saw that he was she answered briefly:—

"I will".

"You remember the visit his Majesty of Idalia paid to Horsham's ancestral halls?"

"Of course I do."

"You remember the story you told me about him and a certain lady?"

"I never told you a story about any one; how dare you suggest that I tell stories about people!"

"You know the lady I mean?"

"I don't; I shan't tell you if I do."

"She's still your dearest friend?"

## The Romance of a

"She is, and she always will be, my very dearest friend."

"Then allow me to tell you, strictly between ourselves, that at the present moment it looks as if your very dearest friend was going to set Europe in flames."

"Pooh!"

"Fact. The Princess Seraphine has had a rumpus with his Idalian Majesty about your very dearest friend, and, apparently in consequence, that rattle-pated youth has rushed over to London, without the princess' knowledge, to see her; if that august lady finds it out there'll be the commencement of trouble which neither you, nor I, nor your dearest friend, will be able to do anything towards stopping."

"Are you in earnest?"

"I am. So perhaps you'll put on your hat, and go to the palace, and tell your dearest friend that if she isn't careful she'll meet with a catastrophe which will break her up into such small pieces that nobody will be able to find them; I happen to know—you can tell her—that a letter was very nearly sent to the queen the other day which would have made an end of her for ever. She's one of the most delightful and most innocent creatures in the world; but I daresay that while we're talking here she's making of herself one of the biggest fools in history. So off you go to the palace and find out from her where the youth is skulking—she knows!—and let me know at the House, because if I'm not in possession of the information in a very short space of time the band will begin to play a tune which will set all Europe dancing."

When the viscount had gone the duchess went to the telephone and asked for a number which is not to be

## Maid of Honour

found in the ordinary call-book. When she had it she wanted to know if Miss Chiltern was in ; and when she was informed that it was believed she was, she requested that Miss Chiltern should be asked to stop in, as the Duchess of Horsham was coming to see her at once about a very important matter indeed.

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE BARBER'S SHOP

A BARBER'S shop in Bloomsbury, within a stone's-throw of Tottenham Court Road. The interior of the small window was covered, half-way to the top, with chocolate-coloured paint. Just above the paint line, in the centre, was a small board which conveyed the information, in various languages, that gentlemen could be shaved and have their hair cut for a very moderate sum, within. One would have said, about three o'clock on that July afternoon, that the establishment was fairly busy. On such small premises the staff of assistants could not be large. So many male persons entered within a few minutes of each other that one feared that several of them would be kept waiting. As, moreover, almost without exception, they appeared to stand in considerable need of a barber's offices, it seemed as if they would have to wait uncomfortably long. Much, however, as most of them stood in need of the tonsorial scissors and razor, although they were visiting an establishment in which presumably those articles were wielded by expert hands, not one of

## Maid of Honour

them offered himself to the artist who presided over the barber's chair. As a matter of fact there was only one chair in the place, and this was occupied by a youth with a large nose, a big head, and a small body. He had on one of those linen dusters which some barbers affect, but though attired in his robe of office he made not the slightest visible attempt to ply his trade. He held an English sporting paper in his hand, which he studied with profound attention, apparently in conjunction with a small and dirty memorandum book, in which, with a minute fragment of lead pencil, he made occasional hieroglyphic entries, always moistening the pointed end of the scrap of lead pencil with his lips before he used it. Presently the shop door would open and a man would enter, carefully closing the door behind as he came in. Being in he would stand stock-still just inside the door for quite a perceptible number of seconds; as each man did this in turn it would seem as if it were some sort of formula. The youth in the chair made no sort of movement as the door opened; indeed, in each case, it was only after the interval of silence that he seemed to wake to the consciousness that any one was there. Then, glancing round, as if casually, he uttered, in some foreign language, what sounded like a single word. The newcomer replied with another. Whereupon the youth would deliver himself of a short sentence, and the newcomer, lifting a curtain which hung against the wall, disappeared behind it. In each instance the mode of procedure was precisely the same; there seemed little doubt that that youth would have been surprised if either of those persons had announced that he wanted a shave or a hair-cut, badly as, for the most part, they wanted both.



## The Romance of a

When each man passed behind the curtain he found himself in a narrow passage ; following it he reached a flight of stairs which descended into what was apparently a basement. Going down this he entered what was obviously a kitchen, though, from the look of it, it had not been used as such for a considerable time. It was of some size. The centre was occupied by a rough deal table. Wooden chairs, forms, stools, were here and there. Several men were assembled. One or two spoke to each other in undertones, but for the most part each seemed to keep himself to himself, and to ignore the presence of his fellows. At last there came into the room that Mr. Wodeski who had forced his unwelcome attentions on Douglas Stewart the day before in Hyde Park. Without a word of greeting to any one he seated himself at the head of the table, whereupon all the others gathered round it as if at a preconcerted signal. Still no one spoke. Wodeski glanced about him, with his unpleasantly hungry-looking eyes, as if he wanted to see who was there, but he took not the slightest notice of any one. Then tilting his hat on to the back of his head, putting his hand up to his brow, as if it ached, he said in English :—

“ Well, he's here ”.

A short, stout man, with a scrubby black beard, exclaimed :—

“ But he shall not go away again ! ”

A man on the other side of the table, who might have been his twin brother, endorsed this assertion.

“ No, that he shall not do ! ”

There again was silence. Wodeski, leaning his elbows on the table, rubbed the palms of his hands together slowly, up and down. He spoke with curious

## Maid of Honour

slowness, as if he were addressing persons who were dull of comprehension.

"To talk is easy; to do—that is not so easy."

The stout man on his right said:—

"There are six of us who have sworn to kill him".

Mr. Wodeski smiled, as if the directness of the announcement tickled him.

"That sounds as if it were not going to be talk only. Will the six comrades stand up?" Six men stood up. Mr. Wodeski eyed them with the eye of a connoisseur of men. "Comrades, you are men of action. That is well. But you will permit me to ask how, exactly, do you propose to set about this little matter. I ask you first."

He addressed a tall, broad-shouldered, fair-haired, fair-bearded fellow, who looked as if he were the soul of careless good-humour. He wore a rough tweed suit and a straw hat, which he pushed on to the back of his head as Wodeski had done. As if laughingly he broke into a torrent of fluent speech, speaking in some language which, it seemed, was not familiar to all his hearers, for some of them leaned back and shrugged their shoulders and gesticulated as if to show that his words were strange. But it was plain that Mr. Wodeski understood. When the fair-haired giant finished he laughed as if in appreciation of some joke of his own, and Wodeski laughed too, but the difference between the men's laughter was a great one. Wodeski replied in English, for reasons which he explained.

"You understand English, comrade; you will forgive me therefore if it is that language which I use. Each of us has his own tongue, but all of us have some English. English is, therefore, as it were, our common

## The Romance of a

ground. With regard, comrade, to what you have said, no one objects less to bombs than I, but here, in London, a bomb is a delicate matter. Here, in London, we are unmolested; the dear English look upon us as what they call 'political refugees'; we are free to plan and arrange what they term 'outrages' in any part of the world outside England. Public opinion, if anything, is on our side. But when it comes to London, take care. One bomb will make more noise in London than a thousand in St. Petersburg. You can blow up half Moscow, and arrange to do it from this room—it only makes good copy for the papers; but blow out the glass from one window in London—there is the devil to pay. So in this hospitable city, I say, so far as it can be avoided, if you please, no bombs! And, by the way, there has been a little experiment already. What has been the result? I have heard nothing."

The question was answered by the individual whom Douglas Stewart had found loitering round the corner when he went out to send his telegram to the Lady of the Sands, and who was not there when he returned.

"Because there is nothing to hear. It never reached him. The fellow with whom he stops, he threw it out of the window unopened. It was wasted in the middle of an empty road."

"That looks as if some one suspected." The other shrugged his shoulders. "He is an extremely wide-awake young man; I have always thought it." He turned to another of the six—the stout man on his right, with the scrubby beard. "And you, comrade, what is it, exactly, that you propose?"

## Maid of Honour

"I undertake that by the morning he shall be dead. That is what I propose ; that simply."

"So far, excellent ; but is that not a little vague ?"

"I am entitled to be vague. I undertake, I say, that by the morning he is dead ; if he is not then my own life is forfeit."

"But still— The comrade will understand——"

"Certainly I understand. It is an article of this society——"

"There are no articles of this society."

"Let the comrade continue."

The intervention came from a very old man, with long white hair and beard, whose face was seamed with wrinkles. He wore a round, soft black felt hat, and rested his lean withered hands on the knob of a stick which he held in front of him. He spoke in a deep, but gentle, voice, the voice of a man who was very patient. Wodeski nodded to him, making, at the same time, a slight gesture with his hand towards the man with the scrubby beard.

"Continue, comrade."

"It is, if you prefer it, an unwritten article of this society that if a comrade has a special cause to be revenged, he has a special claim ; in effect he is privileged, so long, that is, as he does not bungle the business of the society. That privilege is mine. It is within the knowledge of other comrades that, for certain reasons, I have made a particular vow to dispose of this young man whenever opportunity offers. The opportunity is here. I intend to seize it. Before the morning I will have disposed of him in my own manner."

"Single-handed ?"

## The Romance of a

The answer came from the stout man's understudy on the other side of the table.

"If the comrade is so unfortunate as to fail I will answer for the fellow."

The three members of the six who had not yet spoken chimed in.

"And I!"

"And I!"

"The society need have no fear—we work together."

The fair-haired giant, holding out his hands in front of him, said, laughing, speaking with an odd accent, using quaint idioms:—

"I have not English. Only understand. It is only when my brothers do not that I do; if they do, no bombs. Only I make sure. Not so?"

He turned to the scrubby-bearded man, who was standing by his side.

"That is so. The comrade will not appear upon the scene until we all of us have failed. It is not likely that we shall all fail; I beg the society to believe it. We employ no bombs, we five; beyond that I do not think it is necessary that the society should inquire what are the means we propose to use."

The patriarchal old man observed in his calm, quiet voice:—

"I agree that it is not necessary to ask questions. I think that the society may rest content with the assurances the comrades have given. And there is therefore no more to be said."

Wodeski spoke.

"Pardon, on that point, comrade, a little difference of opinion. Permit that I explain. What are the

## Maid of Honour

objects of this society I need not detail; they are familiar to us all. Here is a case in which I think it is possible that those objects may be obtained without, at least in the first instance, disposing of this young man." There were murmurs round the table. "Excuse, comrades, for one minute; a little patience if you please. This fool—this boy—has had a quarrel with this woman they are trying to force him to marry. She knows that he does not care for her; he does not even pretend to care; he treats her badly already; she is, with good reason, jealous. She has the temper of her race; she is quick to take offence, and she never forgives—never. This fellow, in a fit of the sulks, has run away from her, like the hot-headed fool he is, and has come to London to make love to a young woman—a certain girl. It is of this girl the princess is jealous; she does not know what has become of him; she is already half beside herself with doubt, with fear, with rage. We, her friends, have but to acquaint her with the facts, of which those about her are straining every nerve to keep her in ignorance; we have but to tell her the story, and present it in an artistic shape, so that it loses nothing in the presentation, and she will do much more mischief, in her fury, than we can do with bombs."

"How do you propose to tell her?"

This question was asked by one who had hitherto been silent—a small, lean man, sharp-featured, who wore large spectacles, behind which his eyes seemed to gleam almost uncannily bright. Wodeski extended his fingers as if deprecatingly.

"Like our comrades here, I must ask for your in-

## The Romance of a

dulgence; it would take long to explain in detail the means which will be employed; I assure you they will be efficacious. The society has but to say the word; probably in less than an hour the princess will be in possession of all the information she can want. There will arise a storm in the palace which will turn it upside down; the match, which has been arranged with so much trouble, will be broken off for ever. When that woman is in a real rage she takes the bit between her teeth—nothing can stop her. Before night I think she will be flying from the capital to her brother; when she is that way the more scandal she makes the more she likes it. You know her brother; this match was never very much to his taste or to that of his subjects. After a fashion it is a diplomatic victory for Idalia. When she tells him, at the top of her voice—she can shriek!—of how she has been injured, in the face of Europe, he will demand explanations which I do not think that his Majesty of Idalia will be able to give. It will be a pretty quarrel. You know that there are states in Europe which have for long desired to be at each other's throat. When one declares war one does not always give the real reason; the reason which one gives is for the public; it must have a decent sound and must be as remote as possible from the real one. I think that with a quarrel like that to start with, before long there would be fighting going on from which we might derive more satisfaction than from our bombs. I suggest that as a reason why not a hair of this young fool's head should be injured, for the present."

The silence which followed Mr. Wodeski's remarks was broken by the patriarch.

## Maid of Honour

"There is much, comrade, in what you say ; but to my mind the structure which you have raised before our eyes is founded on too many ifs."

The scrubby-bearded man interposed violently :—

"That is what I think ; and about the undertaking of my comrades and of myself there is no 'if'. We do not say if this, if that, takes place, so-and-so will result. We guarantee to the society that before the morning this young fellow shall be dead."

His counterpart on the other side of the table took up the parable where he left off.

"Moreover, it is not against states that this society wars, it is against individuals, it is against that tyranny which they represent." Murmurs of approval came from those about him. "This young man represents to us a condition of affairs which is unendurable ; the first step towards bringing about a change in that condition is to remove the person who is responsible for it. Comrades, is that not the truth ? It is for that purpose we are banded together."

Voices expressing agreement rose from all sides. The keen-faced little man with the large spectacles struck in :—

"But why not both ? Why not dispose of this fellow, and also inform the woman he would marry of what it is that he is after ? Let us do all the mischief we can."

"But," inquired Mr. Wodeski, "if the man is dead what good will it be to inform the woman ? Death covers a multitude of sins, especially from the eyes of a woman. If he is dead she will believe nothing, at least not till the first violence of her grief is past, and then it will be too late. What she is forced to believe



## The Romance of a

then she will not publish; on the contrary, she will conceal it, for her own sake; she will not wish to be made ridiculous. No, in his grave all will be buried. If you dispose of him, the fact that you have disposed of him will be sufficient; those others will understand; they will see that the finger has added another name to those which are already on the wall. You must not paint the lily. If, as it would seem, it is the will of the society that this boy should be disposed of straight away——”

Voices interrupted him.

“Certainly!”

“Beyond a doubt!”

“That is what we want!”

Mr. Wodeski continued:—

“Then in that case, what you say, I say—with this reservation, that I would suggest an alternative. The best-laid plans miscarry; we have seen it ourselves continually. Suppose, for any cause whatever, that our comrades fail of their full purpose; if, that is, this young man is still alive to-morrow morning, then, I say, let us inform the woman. In other words, if we are not able to take advantage of one chance, then do not let us, on that account, also lose the other. I put it to the society that that is sound reason.”

“It seems reasonable to me,” observed the patriarch. “Only I would make this comment, if our six comrades give us their guarantee I do not think it is likely that they will fail to carry it out.”

“We will not fail!” cried the scrubby-bearded man. “Comrades, shall we fail?” They disclaimed, loud-voiced, the possibility of their doing anything of the kind. The scrubby-bearded man went on, addressing

## Maid of Honour

Wodeski: "Comrade, it shall be as you say ; if, in the morning, he still lives, let him live—inform the woman. Don't, as you say, let us lose both our chances ; but I swear to you, by the oath which binds us, that we shall not lose our first chance. By the morning he will be dead."

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XX

### THE LADY AND THE TWO YOUNG GENTLEMEN

DOUGLAS STEWART, alone in his sitting-room, was conscious of a distinct reluctance to go upstairs to Mr. Perkins, who, he was aware, was also alone in his. He could hear him moving about overhead, apparently possessed by a fit of the fidgets. The houses in Brenda Villas were built on a plan which rendered the movements of one inmate audible not only to the other inmates of his own house, but frequently, also, to his neighbours on either side. Mr. Perkins was pacing about the room above like some caged animal ; apparently also, unless sounds were deceptive, he treated the chairs, the table, the couch, as if they were obstacles in an obstacle race, and either sprang on and off them, or else took them in his stride. Now and then there was a crash, which suggested that he and the obstacle had come to grief together. The listener doubted if that sort of thing was good for Mrs. Driver's furniture ; and he wondered, a little grimly, if it was out of his pockets that compensation would have to come for any damage which might be done. Exactly why he was

## Maid of Honour

reluctant to go upstairs and endeavour to induce the rather too lively young stranger to sit still for, at any rate, a minute or two, he could not have said ; but he was. He had suddenly conceived a violent dislike to Mr. Perkins. He was willing to admit that he had no right to do anything of the kind ; but he had. He had a feeling strong upon him that that young man being where he was meant mischief, not only to the young man—though Mr. Stewart was convinced that to him it meant mischief of the most serious kind—but also to every one with whom he was brought into contact. Even to Mrs. Driver, that worthy woman, who had been to him much more than a landlady, and to Hepzibah, her niece. If anything happened to them—and he believed that a good many things might happen to them, practically at any moment—would not the responsibility be his, Douglas Stewart's ? It was he who had brought the young man there, than whom he now clearly perceived that a roaring, raging lion might have proved a less dangerous lodger. That he—Douglas Stewart—went in continual, instant peril of his life, he was aware ; he had had proof of that. Had it not been for the mercy of God he might already have been blinded for life, maimed beyond recognition. That the blow had been aimed at Mr. Perkins made no difference. It was his duty to stand between Mr. Perkins and any blow, whatever it was, whenever it came. He thought it extremely possible that, before the day was over, an attack would be made on the excitable stranger overhead, who, at that moment, was bringing what sounded like another chair with a crash to the floor, which would at least result in damage to Mrs. Driver's property, and, probably, also in no slight

## The Romance of a

injury to himself. And the worst of it was, he was so helpless, so powerless ; he could ask for help, for protection, from no one, least of all from the police. He would have to bear the brunt of whatever might be coming single-handed ; keep his eyes well skinned ; be perpetually on guard ; always on the alert ; ready, without a moment's warning, at the slightest hint of danger, to throw himself into the imminent deadly breach, which, considering how he disliked this Mr. Perkins, was not a pleasant prospect to have to contemplate.

But, after all, what did it matter what happened to him or to any one ? What did matter was what might happen to her. That was really where the shoe pinched. He had a horrid suspicion that out of the mischief which was brewing trouble might come to her. He did not know just what shape it would take, but he feared—he feared all sorts of things for her. On which side most of the blame was lying he was, as yet, not in a position to judge, but it was already pretty plain to him that while Mr. Perkins was acting with what seemed incredible folly, the lady's conduct was not marked with that wisdom which is beyond rubies. He wished that she had instructed him to go to the station, and meet Mr. Perkins, and put him in a cab, and drive him to a police-station, and hand him over to the inspector in charge ; he was persuaded that that would have been, under the circumstances, the best possible course of action for all the parties concerned. He did not wish to criticise, still less to blame, her, but he did wish she had taken him a little more into her confidence. Could she possibly be unconscious of all the dangers into which she had thrown herself blindly, as it were, headforemost ? He believed she

## Maid of Honour

was. Led away by the boy's crass folly, she had caught the contagion of it, and been foolish also. If she had not regarded him merely as an automaton, and treated him as one, he—Douglas Stewart—might at least have shown her which was the path of wisdom.

Well, he had promised to ask no questions; to do, dumbly, as she bade him; he would keep his promise as long as he could. He might still be able to serve her better than he thought.

What was that she had said as she was leaving, about urging Mr. Perkins to return to his mother? She had seemed very much in earnest about it too. So that possibly she already was awaking to the perils which were about her. Had she been urging him to return from whence he came? and had she failed? It looked like it. If she had failed was he likely to succeed? On one point Mr. Stewart was convinced, that Mr. Perkins would pay no more attention to anything he might say than if he was one of those chairs of Mrs. Driver's which he was knocking over. Still she had bade him; he would do her bidding. Though he was convinced that he had only one means of persuasion at his command if he picked Mr. Perkins up, and bore him off bodily, he might persuade him to submit to superior physical force, so long as he was helpless against it, but that was all. Short of that, even though he spoke with the tongue of angels, he might not prevail. Yet he would do her bidding.

As, with sufficiently melancholy mien, as of one who had not much faith in his own mission, he was about to pay a visit to the gentleman upstairs, there came a knocking at the front door. Not the sharp rat-tat of the lady who had mistaken the house for the residence

## The Romancc of a

of Mr. Merton, but something more modest and demure. Mr. Stewart went instantly to open. It was true that it was no part of his business to attend to the front door, but, so far as he could, he meant to make it his business for the present. He moved with quick, firm step, as of one who meant to stand no nonsense. One might almost have imagined, from his bearing, that he expected to find an ogre on the doorstep; what he did find seemed to occasion him surprise. The visitor was a young lady, who, if she was a mere girl, and she was not very much more, was undeniably a pretty one, with a pair of shy, grave eyes, and a something in her carriage which appealed to old-fashioned notions of what was right and proper in a woman. When she saw who had opened a tinge of colour came to her cheeks, while he stared at her as if, for a moment, he could hardly believe his eyes. Then he exclaimed:—

“You! Why, this is a pleasure. I’d sooner see you——” He had drawn aside to permit her to pass; but seeing that she still remained upon the step he cut his own sentence short. “What are you stopping there for? Why don’t you come in?”

“May I?”

“May you! as if there were any question.”

The young lady went in. At the other end of the passage, standing at the top of the kitchen stairs, was Mrs. Driver, who, having ascended from her own quarters to answer the knocker, had found herself fore-stalled by Mr. Stewart, who explained.

“It’s all right, Mrs. Driver, thank you; it’s Miss Moore.”

Mrs. Driver replied without moving from where she was.

## Maid of Honour

"So I see. And how are you, Miss Moore?"

"I'm very well, thank you, Mrs. Driver."

"You're quite a stranger."

"I hope not quite."

"It seems to me that it's a long time since I saw you; I was only making the remark to Mr. Stewart yesterday; I know I've missed you if no one else has. I hear your dear mother has been ailing."

"She's not very grand now, but she's better; I'm hoping that she'll be all right soon. And how are you?"

Mrs. Driver sighed.

"Well, Miss Moore, to be quite plain with you, I'm not feeling as I should like to feel; and if you kept lodgers you'd know how trying they can be."

Without giving any one a chance to speak again Mrs. Driver cut the conversation short by hastily retiring to her stronghold down below. Mr. Stewart ushered the girl into his sitting-room.

"That last remark," she said, "of Mrs. Driver's, sounded as if it were meant for you."

"I'm afraid it was."

"What have you been doing? I thought you were such a model lodger."

"Even model lodgers are not always all they might be in their landlady's estimation."

"I suppose not." The room was still littered with the various articles of wearing apparel which he had bought for Mr. Perkins and paid for out of his own pocket. The girl was regarding them with wondering eyes. "Whatever are all these things? Are you going to start a shop? Or have you been buying the contents of one?"



## The Romance of a

Mr. Stewart, suddenly recalled to the fact of their presence, showed some signs of confusion.

"They—they belong to Mr. Perkins."

"Mr. Perkins? And who is Mr. Perkins?"

"He's—he's the new lodger."

"The new lodger? I didn't know there was one. Is he upstairs?"

"Yes; can't you hear him?"

Just then there was another of the crashes which suggested that the gentleman above was treating Mrs. Driver's belongings in a fashion of his own.

"If that is Mr. Perkins I certainly can. What a noise he's making!"

"Yes, he's—he's an excitable sort of chap."

"When did he come?"

"Oh, he came this morning."

"Only this morning? But what are his things doing in your room? They look as if they were all brand-new."

"They are; some one came to see him and they were brought down here till the visitor went."

"Do you know him then?"

"Well, in a sort of a kind of a way."

"In a sort of a kind of a way? What way's that? You sound mysterious. I thought I knew the names of most of your friends; I never heard you speak of one named Perkins. I'm beginning to understand what Mrs. Driver meant. If Mr. Perkins always goes on like that sometimes lodgers must be trying. Is he ill?"

"No, he's all right. Don't let's talk about Perkins, I've had enough of him for a while. I'm awfully glad to see you; you—you're just what I wanted to see."

## Maid of Honour

"That didn't seem to be the case last evening."

"Last evening? I—I was worried."

"Were you? You looked it. Indeed you look a little worried now. I hope it's nothing very serious."

"Oh, man's born to worries as the sparks fly upwards."

"Is he?"

Her shrewd eyes were fixed upon his face in a quiet scrutiny which seemed to make the gentleman uneasy.

"I hope I wasn't horrid."

"You were. I didn't like it. I made up my mind not to run the risk of being snubbed by you again. So please don't suppose I'm here on my own account; I represent my mother."

"I don't care who you represent, so long as you are here."

"That's very nice of you, but I'm not sure that you mean it. However—please let me go on!—I've not come to discuss with you points of that sort. You see, mother's getting old; and I'm afraid she's lonely; and the misfortune is that you made yourself very nice to her."

"Why is it a misfortune?"

"Because she's a foolish old lady. She doesn't understand what sort of person you are; that, as is only natural, you have formed other connections, and that in consequence you're no longer disposed to waste any more of your time than you can help on a dull old woman; she's absurd enough to miss you."

"I think you're hard on me; you don't understand."

"Oh, yes, I do; it's she who doesn't understand."

## The Romance of a

The long and the short of it is that although I told her how yesterday you snubbed me——”

“I did not snub you!”

“You not only snubbed me then, but it’s probable that you’ll snub me again in a minute or two; it’ll serve me right if you do! She wants you to come and see her next Sunday. She would have written to you to say so, only her hand is still shaky; so, under pressure, I consented to become her messenger and risk another snubbing. She would like you to dine and spend the day if you can; but, if you can’t, if you will call, it will be something. Will you?”

“I should like to very much.”

“Does that mean you’ll come?”

“Florrie, I’m in want of sympathy.”

“Are you? You knew where to get it. But you didn’t come.”

The young gentleman winced; in fact a shrewd observer might have been inclined to suspect that nearly every word the girl uttered made him wince.

“The truth is, I’ve promised to keep an eye on this man Perkins, and not let him out of my sight.”

“Is he in sight now?”

“He’s in the house, so I’m in the house—as long as he’s in town. I hope that won’t be long—I hope he’ll leave to-day; but while he is here I can make no engagements, though I’ll be delighted to come the moment he’s gone.”

“That’s very good of you; I will tell mother what you say. To whom have you made this somewhat singular promise?”

“To—to a friend of his.”

“A friend of his, or of yours?”

# Maid of Honour

"Well, an acquaintance of mine."

"Isn't that a very odd promise to make to a mere acquaintance? Who is the acquaintance?"

"That—that's not the point."

Something which the girl saw in his face, or caught in his tone, brought a pink spot to either cheek.

"I see. I am sorry I asked. Is it also forbidden to ask who is Mr. Perkins?"

"Mr. Perkins? I am Mr. Perkins."

The person referred to stood in the open doorway. He had on a frock coat which Mr. Stewart had paid for. It seemed as if he had only eyes for the lady. So far from showing any signs of being conscious of his having been guilty of an unannounced, and undesired, intrusion, the frankness with which he kept his gaze fixed on her distinctly pleasant countenance suggested that he was entirely content with himself for being where he was—an impression which his words did not remove.

"I wonder why my good friend Mr. Stewart stays so long; now I wonder no more. You ask, who is Mr. Perkins? Permit that I present him to you."

He rounded off his sentence with a bow, which inclined his body to such an angle that he almost bent himself double. As if at a loss what to do or say, the young lady glanced from Mr. Perkins to Mr. Stewart with an air of not unbecoming confusion. It was possibly something which she saw on that gentleman's face, and in his attitude, which caused her to regain her self-possession with somewhat startling rapidity.

"Please, Mr. Stewart, introduce me."

The words were spoken a little crisply, as by one who issues a command. That the request was hardly

## The Romance of a

to the gentleman's taste was obvious ; it is conceivable that it was because she knew it would not be that she had made it ; indeed one could not but suspect that it was because he disliked it so much that he chose to appear unconscious that it had ever been made.

"I was just coming up to you, Mr. Perkins. I had not intended to be away so long."

One felt that there was something in Mr. Stewart's curt speech, coupled with the calm fashion in which he ignored her request, which the lady regarded as a challenge. Mr. Perkins paid no attention to the other's remark, and the young lady transferred all her attention to him.

"Since Mr. Stewart seems a little hard of hearing I will introduce myself. I am Miss Moore."

"Miss Moore! You do me too much honour!" Again the profound obeisance. "While Mr. Stewart enjoys the pleasure of your society I am all alone by myself upstairs."

"You were making rather a noise if you were alone. I thought you were taking some sort of exercise."

"I was exercising myself with the tables and the chairs. However one does not come to London to amuse one's self with chairs and tables."

"So I should imagine."

"It is for a holiday I am come."

"Are you fond of holidays?"

"How can I tell? It is the first holiday I have in my life."

"Mr. Perkins!"

"It is the first time in my life that I have a holiday."

"Are you still at school? But even then you'd have holidays."

## Maid of Honour

"No, I am not at school. I work—since I can remember—always—day and night. I am a slave ; but even a slave has holidays. I? I have none! I long for a holiday ; if you only knew how I long!"

"If you really are in earnest, Mr. Perkins, I'm very sorry for you."

In Mr. Perkins' eyes there was what looked very like a twinkle. He bowed again—not so low this time, possibly to hide the twinkle.

"You are extremely kind. I appreciate the more your kindness since to me it is so rare ; in my position one knows not what such kindness means."

"You seem to be in a rather unfortunate position."

"Be assured, Miss Moore, that it is not of my own choosing."

"I fancy that few of our positions are of our own choosing."

"No, that is true. But you are fond of holidays?"

"I am not so unfortunate as you say you have been, because although I feel that I don't get quite as many as I should like, still I have had enough to know that I love them."

"You love them?"

"Especially when you feel that you have earned them."

"Certainly I feel that I have earned them, but at present I have got no farther than the feeling. And when will you take your next holiday?"

"As a matter of fact I am taking one to-day."

"To-day! It is the hand of destiny!"

"I don't know about it's being the hand of destiny, but I felt as if I simply must take a holiday, though now I'm rather inclined to wish I hadn't."

# The Romance of a

"Why? Why do you wish you hadn't?"

"Because, as things have turned out, it doesn't seem as if I was going to have much of a holiday now that I have taken one."

Although the lady glanced down at the table by which she was standing, whose rather faded cover she was caressing with the tips of her fingers, at the risk of soiling her almost new suède gloves, it is possible that she was peeping, as it were, out of more than one corner of her eyes at Mr. Stewart, and was therefore perfectly conscious that he was not looking what could correctly be called his best. To judge from the expression of his visage the interest which this young man and young woman were suddenly showing in each other filled him with emotions which were altogether undesirable. One guessed that he would have liked to interpose, and bring their conversation to an abrupt conclusion, only his feelings were so strong as positively to render him incapable of doing so. As Mr. Perkins, in a burst of enthusiasm, brought his hands together with a smart report, Mr. Stewart actually started.

"It is the same with me! It is precisely the same with me! Is it not extraordinary?"

It is scarcely to be doubted that she noticed the start; her lips were parted in a smile which, while it was decidedly becoming, was almost malicious.

"What is the same with you?"

"You say that the holiday you have taken looks as if it were going to be nothing at all; it is the same with mine. What sort of holiday is to be spent with chairs and tables?"

"But why need you spend your holiday with chairs and tables? It seems so funny."

## Maid of Honour

"That is the question."

"A woman's holiday is so easily spoilt. Nothing need ever spoil a man's."

"Except a woman."

"Well, a man can spoil a woman's."

It may be that it was because Douglas Stewart caught the flying glance which the speaker aimed his way that he clenched his fists; he did clench them.

"How long holidays do you mean to take?"

"I meant to have a whole day's holiday, but I'm afraid it's over before it's begun."

"One moment! Excuse me! Is it possible to have a whole day's holiday in London with twenty pounds?"

"Twenty pounds!"

"Two people? No? It is impossible? Of course it is absurd!"

"If I spend five shillings on one-day's holiday I feel that I am wickedly extravagant; I have had many delightful holidays for much less than that."

Again she glanced at Douglas Stewart, this time with what might have been a something reminiscent.

"Five shillings! But I have twenty pounds! If you will share your holiday with me we will spend it."

"But I thought you were going to share your holiday with Mr. Stewart?"

"With Mr. Stewart? Bah!"

Nothing could have been more unflattering to the listener than the speaker's tone.

"But I understood him to say that he was not going to let you out of his sight."

"I give you my word I have had enough of people who will not let me out of sight; it is to escape them I am here. It is with you I wish to share my holiday



## The Romance of a

if you will do me so great honour. I ask you to be sorry for me in this way—that you will do for me this kindness. It is the only holiday I have in my life; I think I never have another, not a true holiday. If you will share it with me, then perhaps after all it will not be so very far from the holiday of which I dream, but—if I have to share it with the tables and the chairs!”

“Mr. Perkins, will you forgive me if I ask you something?”

“I will forgive you anything; ask what you will.”

“Are you English?”

“Not exactly.”

“But your name is English if your name is Perkins.”

“My name is Perkins—Bill Perkins.”

“Bill Perkins! Surely nothing could be more English than that.”

She looked at him as if she could not make him out, as if a doubt was dawning in her mind as to whether or not he was amusing himself at her expense.

“You like me better if I were English?”

“It is not a question of liking. I was wondering, since you are a stranger, if you have seen much of London.”

“When I was here before, they show me some things, but most of them were stupid. They did not show me London as you would show it, if you will do me this favour.”

“I couldn’t take you about London all alone.”

“Why not?”

“Why not!”

“It is the English custom.”

“The English custom! You are mistaken; it’s nothing of the kind. Mr. Stewart.”

## Maid of Honour

"Well?"

The gentleman's tone was hardly genial, in which respect it matched his countenance.

"Have you anything particular to do to-day?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Not for my sake, believe me. I merely wondered if you would not like to show your friend Mr. Perkins London, as he wants to see it."

The rapidity with which Mr. Perkins answered for himself was again most unflattering to the gentleman to whom the inquiry was addressed.

"No, no, no! I do not want Mr. Stewart! I won't have him to show me! Before it was men—it is always men; for once it shall be a woman. Miss Moore, I have told you what I wish, I order you to do what I wish."

The girl's eyes opened very wide indeed.

"You order me?"

"I—I ask your pardon; I—I beg you will do it. If you only knew how much it would mean to me in the time to come, you would not make it necessary that I should go down upon my knees; I would that I had the English to tell you. I entreat that you will let us have a whole day's holiday in London together, just you and I!"

Perhaps it was because he feared that the girl might be moved by the young gentleman's eloquent persuasion—because, in his way, the lad was eloquent—that Douglas Stewart at last interposed with a remark of his own.

"I have a message, Mr. Perkins, which I wish to give you."

"From whom is your message?"

## The Romance of a

There was more than a touch of hauteur in the lad's bearing which, while in some odd way it seemed to sit naturally on him and became him well, it was plain that Stewart resented, though, for reasons of his own, he found himself powerless to show his resentment openly. Miss Moore observed the two young men with a mixture of surprise and entertainment, as if she were becoming more and more at a loss to understand the nature of the relations which existed between them.

"If you will come upstairs for a minute I will tell you what it is."

"I will not come. Tell it to me now."

"It is for your private ear."

"It is impossible that you can have a message for what you call my private ear. From whom is it?"

"Can you not guess?"

"Guess? Why should I guess? I ask you, from whom is your message?"

He spoke in a tone of authority, as to one who was well aware of his own inferiority. Miss Moore, who had cause to know that, as a rule, Douglas Stewart, sometimes to his serious disadvantage, was ready enough to resent any attempt to, what he called, "come the autocrat" over him, was surprised to find him preserve what was almost an air of deference. It was true that he only replied after a certain amount of hesitation, and then with not the best grace in the world; still he did reply, and that, as she was aware, under such circumstances, where he was concerned, meant much.

"The message is from Miss Chiltern."

"Miss Chiltern? What message has Miss Chiltern given you for me?"

As the young men looked at each other on Mr.

## Maid of Honour

Stewart's face there was almost a menace, as if he wished the other to understand that in his words there was much more than their superficial meaning.

"I am to try and induce you to return at once to your mother, and to tell you that in so doing you will be doing her the greatest service it is in your power to render her."

This time, after a momentary interval of apparent surprise, Mr. Perkins spoke as if the other were some ill-conditioned menial.

"Miss Chiltern dares to send me such a message, and you dare to give it to me? With Miss Chiltern I will deal in my own way, at my own time. I would recommend you, Mr. Stewart, not to presume on the position which you occupy towards me at the moment. It is not my fault that you are assigned to me as an attendant; I do not propose, on that account, to endure from you insolence."

"I do not intend to be insolent. But you misapprehend the situation when you suppose that I have been, what you term, 'assigned' to you as an attendant. I was merely asked by Miss Chiltern to find you rooms during your stay in town."

Before Mr. Perkins could retort Miss Moore asked a question.

"Who is Miss Chiltern?"

It was put to Mr. Stewart; but as that gentleman showed no inclination to furnish a reply Mr. Perkins replied instead, in a style of his own.

"Miss Chiltern? She is a friend of Mr. Stewart."

Matters being as they were, this was rather a bold stroke. Mr. Stewart, however, offered no comment on this somewhat misleading description; if anything he

## The Romance of a

shut his lips still tighter. Into the lady's eyes there came a gleam of light.

"A friend of Mr. Stewart? Is that so? I see. Now I begin to understand." She turned to Mr. Perkins with her prettiest smile. "If Mr. Stewart doesn't care to show you London—and you don't seem as if you'd like to trespass on his time—if you don't mind putting up with me as a guide I'll act as Mr. Stewart's substitute, though, of course, I can't pretend to be able to show you half, or a quarter, of what he could, because, while I'm one of the most ignorant people in the world, he's one of the very cleverest."

"You will share with me my holiday?"

"Yes, if you will take me in as partner, for the day."

"This is delightful! This is excellent! This is most charming! You are—you are——"

"Never mind what I am. Hadn't you better go and get your hat?"

"I go to get my hat, but before I go let me tell you what I want to do. To begin, in the very first place I want to ride on the top of an omnibus."

"On the top of an omnibus?"

"It is one of the things which I have promised myself that one day if I ever had the chance I would do; to-day I will do it! Beyond all things I should like to drive!"

"To drive? An omnibus?"

"Yes, indeed, to drive an omnibus! What you call it? That would be a spree! Could it not be arranged?"

"I'm afraid not; there would be a good many difficulties in the way. For one thing you wouldn't know where to drive to."

"That would be no trouble; the driver, the real

## Maid of Honour

driver, he sits behind me, he tells me where to go—I go! —that would be easy. No? Could it not be managed?” She shook her head; her face all lit with laughter. “Well then I am resigned! I will not drive! But I ride on the top of an omnibus—not only of one, but of all the omnibuses; then we have lunch.”

“Wouldn’t it take rather a long time to ride on all the omnibuses? I believe they’re thousands.”

“Thousands! So many! Ah! Then we ride on them till we are hungry, then we lunch—so!—it is easy. After we lunch I think that I would like to ride on the top of a tram.”

“Of a tram? After all those omnibuses?”

“It would be a great joke! I would like to ride on ever so many; it is an ambition I have always possessed. Then we have some tea—I know that in England you always have tea; it is, to my mind, a taste not easy to learn, but I drink it! Then you take me somewhere—where you please; only one condition I make, I go to no picture-gallery—no!—to no museum, to nothing of the kind; I do not wish to spoil my holiday; to-day I wish only to see what is amusing. Then we dine in some place where it is altogether charming, where we order what we like to eat and to drink. When we have dined—well!—we go to a music-hall, in a hansom—we two together; to a music-hall where they make us laugh. Ah! beyond all things what I desire is to laugh; in all my life I have laughed so little! Always a grave face, always a serious manner; I want to split my sides! I am tired of being serious! We will go to a music-hall where they make me ache with laughing. Afterwards we have supper—a gay supper—where we still laugh, and in the morning we come home. Oh, what a holiday!”

## The Romance of a

Mr. Perkins clasped his hands in an ecstasy which was serio-comic. Miss Moore looked at him as if some of his enthusiasm had affected her.

"That is a gorgeous programme; the last half will have to be cut out—I don't know at what hour you think I shall want to be home; but in the first half there are possibilities. I think I've an idea of what it is you want, and I daresay matters can be managed so that you shall have it; but as time's passing, hadn't you better go and get your hat?"

"My hat?" Mr. Perkins, turning, regarded Mr. Stewart as if he were about to issue an order, or as if he wondered that it should be necessary for him to give one. Then he said, with a queer smile, as if he were saying the drollest thing, "I will not request Mr. Stewart to give me my hat; I will get it myself; I am Bill Perkins!"

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER XXI

### ON THE TOP OF THE OMNIBUS

AT first, after Mr. Perkins had departed in search of his hat the lady and gentlemen were speechless, as if each was conscious of a feeling of constraint; the gentleman's sense of awkwardness being more obvious than the lady's, probably for the sufficiently good reason that he was so much better acquainted with the singularity of the situation than she was. It seemed as if he had to bring actual force to bear upon himself before he could ask a question.

"Do you really mean that you seriously propose to spend the day with his—with Mr. Perkins?"

"Is there anything about Mr. Perkins to object to?"

"He's an entire stranger to you!"

"But he's a friend of yours; I feel sure you wouldn't have an objectionable person for a friend."

"He's not a friend of mine; I've told you already that I never saw him in my life until this morning."

"Then whose friend is he?"

"I—I can't explain."

"Pray don't—don't fancy that I want you to. Only I should be obliged if you won't interfere with me."



## The Romance of a

"Interfere with you?"

"What business is it of yours if I choose to show Mr. Perkins the sights of London? I understand that ladies of the highest birth and breeding act as guides to the most perfect strangers. I presume that he is at least respectable since, at any rate, it was you who brought him here."

"Florrie, this isn't at all like you!"

"What isn't at all like me?"

"Behaving like this!"

"I deny that you have the slightest right to criticise my behaviour, but, supposing you have, what is there in it of which you complain?"

"It isn't that, I don't want to criticise you, heaven knows! but I tell you there are at least a dozen reasons why you should not be seen in the streets of London with Mr. Perkins."

"Name one of them."

"There was a time when my mere assurance would have been sufficient."

"There was a time, and that not so long ago, when you were such an entirely different person to the one you are at present that I can't understand what can have happened to change you, and at the same time if I had asked you who a person was you'd instantly have told me. Who is Mr. Perkins?"

"Very well!" The badgered young man looked as if he were disposed to tear his hair. "He's coming back—I can hear him—I don't mean to quarrel with you, I've too much to bear already; if you really intend to start with him on this wild-goose chase I can only say that I come too."

"By all means. Who objects? I don't mind being

## Maid of Honour

seen with you in the streets of London, and, as you put it, there was a time when you didn't mind being seen in the streets with me."

"Florrie! it isn't fair! If you only understood you'd know it isn't fair. I feel——"

He had no time to explain how he felt. Mr. Perkins came bursting into the room with his arms full of brand-new hats.

"See now, which shall I wear? I have collected them altogether, it is for you to choose—this which you call a silk hat, what you call a billycock, a straw hat, a cloth hat, what you please."

"I think that, as you're wearing a frock coat, a silk hat might look best, don't you?"

"Good! then the silk hat! at this angle! so! If you are ready to do me the honour to start now for our holiday, permit that I open the door."

Although he held it invitingly open the lady still remained standing by the table, brushing the faded cloth lightly with the tips of her gloved fingers.

"Mr. Stewart says he's coming."

"Mr. Stewart! he! no, no, no! I will not have him, I do not want him!"

Mr. Perkins seemed capable of a degree of frankness which was a little appalling.

"But I thought he was a friend of yours."

"A friend—of mine—Mr. Stewart? You jest?"

Mr. Perkins uttered these six words with so sublime an air of scorn that, for the moment it transfigured him. The girl stared at him as if bewildered.

"But—he's a friend of mine."

"Of yours? He is honoured. But why do we wait?"

## The Romance of a

I have my hat, behold ! and, as you said, the time is passing."

Douglas Stewart spoke.

"I am sorry, Mr. Perkins, if my society is inconvenient ; but, if you propose to spend the day out of doors, I am afraid I must force it on you, for reasons which you understand."

"What are the reasons I understand ?—There are no reasons." Stewart was still with a silence which it seemed that the other resented. "You hear, I tell you that there are no reasons ; there are none !" Stewart's glance strayed from the angry speaker to the window. A shabby looking man, apparently a foreigner, was strolling along the pavement on the other side of the road. When he came abreast of No. 13 he paused, as if to enjoy a deliberate stare at the window of the room in which they were standing. Miss Moore, looking to see why Mr. Stewart's glance had so suddenly strayed, saw the fellow opposite, but Mr. Perkins remained unconscious of his being there. He went hotly on. "You say you have not been assigned to me as an attendant, so you have not even that excuse ; I order you to stay here."

The man opposite still stared ; it seemed as if Stewart had one eye for him, and the other for Mr. Perkins. There had come into his voice a quality which had not been there just now ; all at once he had grown more dignified.

"I hope that you will stay also, and that you will permit me to speak to you ; there is something which I should like to say to you."

"What do I care what you like ? I will do neither ; I will not permit you to speak to me, and I will not stay."

## Maid of Honour

"Then, in that case, I have no option but to go where you go."

Mr. Perkins looked as if he were about to strike him, but before he could carry his intention—if he had it—into effect, Miss Moore interposed. It is possible that, being a quick-witted young woman, she wondered what there was about the man opposite which had caused the change in Mr. Stewart's bearing.

"If Mr. Stewart doesn't go I'm afraid I can't."

"But he will spoil everything. In my life there is always a Mr. Stewart—who will not let me out of his sight ; who will not let me do what I want ; who will not let me be free ; who makes of me a slave ; to escape from that continual espionage—for me that is a holiday !"

"I think you use rather extravagant language ; I don't see why Mr. Stewart need be any of these things, and I'm sure you'll find him a much better guide than I am."

"I do not want a guide ; I want to be unguided—to go where I please—if I choose, to lose myself ; I am sick of having everything so exactly planned."

"Nothing need be planned—what a fuss you make ! Let's start off together, and if we find it doesn't work, let's divide ; what's to prevent us ? Only, as we've both of us said already, the time's passing."

"Oh, very well, if Mr. Stewart will come, let him ! When I can endure him no longer I will drop him from the top of the omnibus. Come along !"

"If you'll allow me I'll go first."

The man opposite, having seemingly stared his fill, was strolling off leisurely, as if there was nothing which made it necessary for him to hurry. Stewart, forestall-

## The Romance of a

ing Mr. Perkins, was on the front doorstep before the other was out of the room. On the instant, as if his appearance had been a preconceived signal which had been conveyed in some occult fashion, the man over the way wheeling round, stood again to stare. While first Mr. Perkins, and then Miss Moore came out, he remained stock still. Mr. Perkins ran down the steps like an excitable boy.

"Come along, Miss Moore! Where is an omnibus? Tell me, where is an omnibus?"

Mr. Stewart told him.

"If you'll cross over and take the first turning on the right, you'll find plenty of omnibuses at the end, within two minutes' walk."

Miss Moore, beginning to realise that Stewart was playing a part in some drama whose meaning at present was hidden from her, and of which Mr. Perkins was totally unconscious, descended the steps with more dignified mien. As she went down she had, to use the language of metaphor, one eye for the man who had stopped again to stare; it seemed to her that his was a sinister figure; another for the lively youth, who was urging her to greater haste, and for whom, for some inexplicable reason, she was becoming oddly conscious of a feeling which was akin to sympathy, and as it were a third for Douglas Stewart, whose attitude she was commencing dimly to understand in a fashion which bewildered her. So soon as she reached the pavement, Mr. Perkins seizing her by the hand, actually began to pull her across the road.

"Quick! quick for the omnibus! quick!"

His conduct was that of a child who, starting on a long looked-for expedition, is unable to conceal the

## Maid of Honour

eagerness with which he anticipates the joys which are to come. She laughingly remonstrated.

"It's not a question of catching a train; there are plenty of omnibuses, and there's plenty of time. Let go of my hand, Mr. Perkins, and you needn't run."

The young gentleman seemed to have his doubts.

"But let us lose no time."

"We'll lose no time, but I assure you you needn't run, you'll find lots of omnibuses just round the corner."

Mr. Perkins and the lady went off in front; the young gentleman talking at the top of his voice in a style which the lady seemed to find embarrassing.

"Ssh! you mustn't talk so loud! you'll have everybody staring."

"Let them stare! What do I care? To-day I care for nothing; for nothing in the world! I defy the lightning!"

He struck an attitude in the middle of the road which, if it was intended to recall Ajax on a memorable occasion, was curious rather than striking. The lady both smiled and flushed; this was conduct to which she was unaccustomed.

"If you're going to behave like this I'm sure you'll find Mr. Stewart a more suitable companion than me."

"Mr. Stewart! That for Mr. Stewart! Where is the omnibus? Let us make haste and find it."

They made haste, rather more haste than the girl quite cared for; an ordinary walking pace would not suit Mr. Perkins. Mr. Stewart followed a few paces in the rear. The pair in front vanished round the corner; when he reached it he paused and turned. The man who had watched them issue from the house still stood motionless. But when he saw the pair go round the

## The Romance of a

corner, and Mr. Stewart turn to look at him, he swung round, making for a turning which was perhaps fifty or sixty yards ahead. Mr. Stewart followed the others. The road in which they were was but a short one ; just long enough to permit of two rows of houses being back. When they were half-way down it an omnibus appeared, passing along the main thoroughfare which was at the end. Mr. Perkins' excitement at sight of it, was tragic.

"Hi! there is an omnibus! hi hi hi! quick! we lose it! run as fast as you can!"

He showed them an example in the way of pace which did him credit, even taking off his top hat, and holding it in his hand to enable him to move faster. Mr. Stewart called after him.

"There's not the slightest need to hurry; that's going the wrong way."

"The wrong way! what do you mean, the wrong way? It is an omnibus! I care not which way it goes."

Mr. Stewart reflected for an instant. He had intended to go towards town; this 'bus was going to Putney. But he thought it probable that at the end of the next turning the loiterer would be waiting, prepared to board any 'bus on which they were. By taking this one they would, at any rate, not pass his way. So he fell in with Mr. Perkins' whim.

"Very well! take that one if you like! it will do as well!"

But it so chanced that the vehicle in question had passed out of sight upon its way, apparently unconscious of having been hailed; while as Mr. Perkins joined the main road another approaching from the opposite direction, came lumbering along. As he had put it, an omnibus was an omnibus to Mr. Perkins, its

## Maid of Honour

destination was a matter of no concern whatever. At sight of the newcomer he gave a joyous whoop, and, clapping his hat on his head, sprang on to the step while it was yet in motion, and began to mount the steps two at a time. The 'bus stopping, Miss Moore followed with somewhat less impetuosity. Stewart hesitated. He perceived that the stranger was at the corner of the next turning ;—he must have sprinted to have reached it so soon. Should he make for him, and prevent his getting on the vehicle, or even following it ? That would mean letting Mr. Perkins go on without him ; and perhaps, after all, he would get the worst of it with the stranger. He really had no right to try to stop him from doing as he pleased ; beyond doubt the fellow would not do as he wished without offering vigorous objection. While he was considering, as rapidly as he could, the pros and cons, the conductor hailed him.

“Now, sir, if you're coming !” He jumped on to the step as the 'bus was starting, meaning to stop there till the next corner was reached, and then, if the thing were feasible, to keep the way. But he reckoned without the conductor. “Inside or out, sir?—you can't stop !” The vehicle having reached the next corner, hailed by the stranger, stopped. The conductor addressed Mr. Stewart, who was still on the step, with official brusqueness. “Didn't you hear what I said ? In or out, please ! you can't stop there, your blocking the way !”

Which was precisely what Douglas Stewart desired to do ; yet, when he caught the conductor's eye, he climbed to the roof. It had become plain even to him that nothing was to be gained by trying to keep the



## The Romance of a

stranger off that omnibus. He had nothing but the vaguest suspicion to go upon ; for all he could show to the contrary he might be the most harmless of persons. To try to prevent him making use of a public conveyance, for no ostensible reason whatever, would not only be putting himself in the wrong, but would entail a scene in which he would almost certainly be worsted, and the consequences of which might be far-reaching.

When he had gained the top he found that Mr. Perkins and Miss Moore were together on the front seat on the driver's near-side. The front seat on the off-side was occupied by two females ; the one immediately behind his charges was empty. The girl called his attention to it with her hand. Not only did he act upon her hint, and sit upon it ; but leaning forward, resting his hands on the back of the seat in front, he planted himself in the middle of it in such a manner that he really left no room on it for anyone else. The man who had followed him up the steps declined to take his hint. He came straight down the aisle to where Stewart was sitting. When he saw the young gentleman made no sign of moving to make way for him, he said, speaking with the strong foreign accent with which Mr. Stewart had recently become unpleasantly familiar,

" If you please."

Mr. Stewart, pretending to have been made suddenly conscious of his presence, glanced round the roof.

" There is plenty of room elsewhere."

Indeed there were two or three seats with one on them. But it seemed that they were not to the other's taste.

" There is also room here. If you please."

## Maid of Honour

"Why can't you sit on one of those seats? they're empty."

"Because I choose to sit here."

The driver looked round.

"Room on each seat for two, sir; you can't keep one to yourself."

The conductor's voice came from the other end.

"Move up there, please!"

Stewart seemed to be considering the advisability of trying to throw the fellow over on to the road, when the clumsy vehicle lurching, the man, to save himself, rested his hand upon his shoulder. The young gentleman blazed up.

"What do you mean by doing that?"

"I did not mean to touch you; only you will not make room."

The conductor came along.

"If you want a seat to yourself, sir, there's an empty one here; there's room for two on that."

Mr. Stewart yielded, since it seemed to him that he had no alternative. The man placed himself at his side. As he did so, Mr. Perkins, attracted by the brief discussion, glanced round and caught his eye. The two regarded each other with odd intensity. Then Mr. Perkins looked away again quickly, as one who desires to escape from an unpleasant sight. It would not be easy to describe exactly what it was, but there was something in their appearance which suggested that these two men came from the same country, and that the discovery of the fact gave neither of them pleasure.

The omnibus lumbered into the King's road. Mr. Perkins had grown silent. That exhilaration which had marked his bearing, and had made him seem so

## The Romance of a

much more of a boy even than he was, had suddenly gone. He sat stiff and straight upon his seat, looking neither to the right nor to the left; seeming to take no interest in anything. That pleasure which he had expected to derive from his first ride on the top of an omnibus appeared to have ended in nothing. To look at him no one would have supposed that he was enjoying himself to any appreciable extent. In some queer way he had all at once grown older; as if a sense of responsibility had come on to him, out of space, and aged him.

Miss Moore, vaguely conscious of the change which had taken place in her companion, sought with small feminine wiles to bring back to him his irresponsible high spirits. She called his attention to trifles which, while they were commonplaces to the Londoner, were, she deemed, the sort of thing to amuse a stranger, especially the kind of a stranger which Mr. Perkins had been so lately. But Mr. Perkins was not that kind of stranger now, he was a different man; for in a moment he seemed to have become a man. He paid scant heed to what she said. When she called his attention to the little objects of public interest which mark that dreary thoroughfare he paid no heed at all, but sat stern and still, unbending.

And immediately behind him sat Douglas Stewart, on guard. That the fellow at his side meant mischief he became momentarily more assured; yet he did nothing which would justify him in taking the initiative. He merely did what he himself was doing, sat quiet. The only thing about him which was noticeable was the persistence with which he kept his gaze fixed upon the young man in front. That Mr. Perkins, with his

## Maid of Honour

back to him, was conscious of the fellow's sinister scrutiny; and that it was that consciousness which was partly responsible for the change which had taken place in his demeanour, Douglas Stewart felt sure. The connection gave him an idea; he might disappoint the gentleman yet.

The conductor came along for the fares. The stranger being on the outside, was asked first. He took no notice of the conductor's first demand, with the intention Mr. Stewart did not doubt, of learning first, if he could, how far the others were going. Stewart alive to the man's move, held his peace. The conductor repeated his request more sharply.

"Now then, fares please! Your fare, sir!"

Finding himself particularly addressed, the man took out a penny; without, however, naming the point at which he wished to alight. Stewart suspected that if they went farther than the penny would carry them, when his pennyworth was up, if nothing had happened, the stranger would produce a second penny, and then, if they still rode on, a third. He came to a sudden resolution. Taking out three pennies he held them out to the conductor.

"Stop please, we get down here." Then leaning forward, he touched Mr. Perkins on the shoulder. "Off you come!" The young man looked round at him. As if with sudden comprehension he stood up. The 'bus slowed. Stewart addressed the man at his side. "Be so good as to let me pass, sir."

The man taking his hands out of his pockets rose, as if to make way; and, leaning towards Mr. Perkins, struck at him with something which he had taken out of his pocket. It so happened, however, that Miss

## The Romance of a

Moore had risen at the same time ; and the 'bus coming to a standstill with an unexpected jerk, caused her to lose her balance. Intervening, at the critical moment, between the stranger and Mr. Perkins, the blow which was intended for him reached her. Cursing, as if beside himself with fury because she had robbed him of his prey, he struck at her again. A voice behind exclaimed :—

“ He's killed the lady ! ”

Taken after all, unawares, and rendered uncertain on his own feet, by the jerking of the 'bus, Douglas Stewart endeavoured to grip the man by the throat. But the fellow, wriggling from his grasp, made for the opposite side, where there was an empty seat, and, resting his hand on the rail which ran along from end to end vaulted over it into the road beneath.

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE LORD AND THE LADY

THE Marquis of Wandsworth, alighting from his hansom, surveyed the house in front of which it had stopped with curious eyes.

"This is Brenda Villas?"

The driver explained.

"There's 13 up on the door there, and this is Brenda Villas."

"Rum looking place."

This his lordship said to himself. He had gradually woken to the consciousness as the hansom brought him along, that the errand on which he was bent was, to phrase it gently, rather an odd one. In fact to be precise, he was not quite sure what the errand was, his assurance grew less and less the farther the hansom went. He was a gentleman who was very quickly angry, and also very quickly cool again. Brought up on the modern equivalent for a bed of roses, a crumpled leaf was not a trifle which was likely to escape his notice. It was apt indeed to assume, from his point of view, the dimensions of a disaster. At the very

## The Romance of a

least it was a thorn in his side which hurt, and when he was hurt he made a noise, rather than anything else because of the surprise he felt that any one or anything should venture to take such a liberty with him. All his life he had been pretty well accustomed to having his own way, certainly he had been in the habit of getting all he wanted. As he himself was wont to say, when he was in an expansive mood, that was because the things he wanted were so few, in effect they were merely those thousand and one things which he regarded as the proper appurtenances of a man of rank and wealth. Only quite recently had he really wanted something which he could not get or, at least, which he found it extremely difficult to get. And of all the queer tricks which fortune could have played, that was a thing which, until lately, he had regarded not only as an inevitable appanage to a person of his position, but also it is to be feared, almost as an inevitable evil—it was a wife.

That the Marquis of Wandsworth might have been encumbered with that possession years ago, and might have selected her out of all that was most delightful in the feminine line in all the countries of the world, no one knew better than the Marquis of Wandsworth. He was no fool. He did not suppose, for an instant, that it was because he was the most charming of his sex that he was received everywhere, by the most delicious women with open arms. He did not believe that, as he would have put it, he was a bad sort. But then he knew other men who were not bad sorts, quite good sorts in fact, and they were not welcomed as he was. He had noticed it. They were not the Marquis of Wandsworth, with, from the peerage point of view,

## Maid of Honour

some of the best blood of Europe in their veins, the owner of famous houses, vast estates, and a great income; he had been marquis when he was six; during the fifteen years of his minority the Wandsworth revenues had accumulated until the accumulations were represented by an immense capital sum, which was invested in the best securities. He was not extravagant, relatively, he only bought everything he wanted, he sometimes boasted among his intimates, that never in any one year had he spent a whole year's income, or anything like it.

So the Marquis of Wandsworth was a personage. Everybody wanted to marry him, of course they did. Marriage is a woman's profession, for a girl to marry him meant that she had achieved the highest possible professional success. All the world knew that. But he—he did not want to marry, that is, not yet. A Marquis of Wandsworth had to marry sometime. But there was no hurry. He had a perfectly sound constitution. He could safely put it off till he was in the forties, or perhaps the early fifties. He did not want to be bothered with a wife till he could help it.

That had been his attitude until, comparatively, the other day. Then he met Di Chiltern, who was by way of being his third or fourth cousin, met her for the first time since she had worn long frocks. She surprised him. More, she upset him. He was introduced to her in the park in the morning, and on the afternoon of the same day he revoked at bridge. It was her fault. Instead of looking to see if he had a club to follow, he was wondering what it was about her which had surprised him, and he played a heart, paying no attention whatever to his partner's challenge.



## The Romance of a

Cost them the rubber! Which was a nice beginning. But there was worse to follow. She became a maid of honour; it was understood that the queen had made a point of it. The marquis was annoyed. He told her that he wanted to make her his wife, and that therefore she ought not to have entered into any engagement of the kind. She laughed in his face, which surprised him more than ever. She said, "Dear Bob, how silly you are!" and left him gaping.

He imagined that she had misapprehended his meaning, he could imagine nothing else—the next time he saw her he told her so. She laughed at him again, and she had laughed at him ever since. He was ashamed to think of the number of times he had intimated to her that he desired that she should become his wife, never once had he been able to induce her to take him seriously. She seemed to have got into the habit of regarding him as a standing joke. It was monstrous, almost beyond belief, maddening. And pretty mad it made him. For weeks now he had not been himself at all. He was not sure that his health was not being undermined, certainly his temper was, and it is proverbial that the health and the temper go together. Now-a-days he was always flying into a rage, and there were so many things to make him.

There were the other men who wanted her to marry them, men of all sorts and conditions, rich and poor, peers and commoners, boys and bald-heads. He had had passages with more than one of them, in his righteous anger, particularly with one George Barton, who had no qualifications whatever, beyond the fact that he was a presumptuous puppy who had dared to make his future wife conspicuous by dancing three

## Maid of Honour

dances with her on a single evening, to her future husband's unspeakable disgust. But such a good opinion had he of the value of his own various attractions that not one of them had caused him serious qualms until the entrance in the lists, as a candidate for the lady's hand, of Ferdinand Beissmann. Beissmann! actually a foreigner! a native of the-Lord-only-knew what country! who was more than old enough to be her father. His only qualification was his fabulous wealth—his lordship had indeed deemed it fabulous, until, having had inquiries made, he learnt that it was real enough, only there was so much of it that no one knew how much. One thing was clear, compared to Beissmann, he was a pauper, the man could lose, throw into the sea if he liked, all that he was worth, putting it at its highest figure and scarcely notice it. A delightful state of affairs, and that old scoundrel Roffey was supporting his pretensions, his future wife's father.

If he could have had his way his lordship would have picked a quarrel with Mr. Beissmann about something which was as far removed from Miss Chiltern as possible, and gone out and shot him in the real good old-fashioned style. But as, unfortunately, an English gentleman cannot do that sort of thing in the present year of grace, the Marquis of Wandsworth suffered many things on account of Mr. Beissmann.

And now the fellow was positively making scurrilous statements about the girl he professed to admire! telling confounded lies about her! and sticking to them too. It was in consequence of his disgraceful conduct that he—Lord Wandsworth—was where he was; in front of this—this distinctly disreputable looking house. And the mischief was, that now that he was here he

## The Romance of a

was not quite clear in his own mind what he had come for. However, now that he was here he was going to do something, he did not quite know what, but something, he was not coming all that way for nothing, certainly not. So he went up the steps, and he knocked at the door, crash! crash! crash! crash! like a person of importance who was in rather a rage. And Mrs. Driver opened, and the Marquis of Wandsworth was at once at a loss because, for a second, the name of the person he had come to see had slipped off the tip of his tongue.

"Is Mr.—Mr.—what's the name of the man who lives here?—is he in?"

Not unjustifiably Mrs. Driver seemed to be of opinion that the description was insufficient.

"Who is it you wished to see?"

"I—I can't think of the fellow's name—you know who I mean—is he in?"

"Is who in?"

"The man who lives here!"

"What man?"

"Don't I tell you I can't remember his name?"

"Then I think you'd better call again when you can. I don't give people's names to strangers."

She was apparently on the point of shutting the door in his lordship's face, which would have been to treat him with ignominy indeed, when the name came suddenly to him.

"I've got it—Stewart—Douglas Stewart! Is Mr. Douglas Stewart at home?"

"Mr. Stewart is not at home; he has been out some time."

"When will he be at home?"

## Maid of Honour

"That I cannot tell you ; he left no word with me. I will give him a message if you leave one. What name shall I mention ? "

The marquis hesitated. There was something about the old woman at the door to which he was unused ; he almost felt as if she was snubbing him. He really wished that he had not come ; and he was just about to tell her that she need mention no name, but he would perhaps call again, though he would take precious good care to do nothing of the kind—when a second hansom drew up, and Miss Chiltern got out. She saw him at once.

"Bob !" she exclaimed, "Whatever are you doing here ? "

At sight of her he actually felt that he was turning red—at his time of life ! and he was rubicund enough by nature. He stammered.

"That—that's a question which I ought to put to you."

"A question you ought to put to me ? " It seemed from the way in which she echoed his words, as if she did not understand what he meant. Coming quickly up the steps she asked of Mrs. Driver, "Is Mr Stewart in ? " No hesitation about the name with her ; she had it pat enough. Mrs. Driver gave her the answer she had given the marquis. It occasioned her distress which she did not attempt to conceal. "Oh dear !—not in ! whatever shall I do ?—Is—is nobody in ? "

"Nobody except me and my niece, Hepzibah ! "

"May I come in ? " The old woman moved aside. Passing her Miss Chiltern opened the door of Mr. Stewart's sitting-room, as if half unconscious of what she was doing. She seemed to be in a state of curious

## The Romance of a

agitation. The Marquis of Wandsworth, finding his presence ignored, went after her into the house, and passed her into the sitting-room, entirely uninvited. Miss Chiltern stood with the handle of the door in her hand, to speak to Mrs. Driver. "Do you know where he's gone?"

"I haven't an idea."

"Or when he will be back?"

"I can't tell you that either. As a rule he tells me where he's going, and when I may expect him back, so that I may have his dinner, or his tea, or what not, ready for him when he comes. But this morning he went out without saying a word either to me, or to Hepzibah, soon after you left. Indeed I didn't know that he was going out till I saw him crossing the road."

"This—this is awful!"

Mrs. Driver stared.

"I don't know that you can call it awful because he doesn't tell me about his movements, he's not bound to."

"I didn't mean that, you don't understand. May I stop in his room a minute, I—I want to think."

"Seeing that you seem to be his friend, miss, you ought to know if he's likely to object better than me."

"I'm sure he won't object."

"Then if you're sure he won't object I'm sure I don't; only please don't touch his papers or anything, because he's most particular."

"I promise you I won't touch anything."

Miss Chiltern pulled the door to; apparently oblivious of the fact that she was shutting it in Mrs. Driver's face. That estimable woman stared at it with puzzled countenance.

## Maid of Honour

"As Hepzibah said, she is the loveliest girl I ever saw, and the most beautifully dressed, and quite the lady; but there's something funny about her all the same."

She went downstairs, to talk it over with Hepzibah.

In Douglas Stewart's sitting-room Miss Chiltern continued standing by the door still with the handle in her hand, seemingly as oblivious of the Marquis of Wandsworth as she had been just now of Mrs. Driver; until he recalled himself to her attention.

"I say, Di, is anything the matter?"

She turned towards him with a start.

"Bob! I'd forgotten you were there!"

He looked at her in amazement.

"Di! what's wrong?"

"Everything's wrong, everything!" An idea seemed all at once to strike her. "Bob, sometimes you've pretended that you cared for me."

He cut her short.

"Pretended! the idea of saying that I've pretended! Di, you're not fair to me, you never are!"

"You've said that before."

She spoke wearily; as if it fatigued her to talk to him at all.

"I say it again; you give me only too good ground for saying it again! Who's this man Stewart?"

"This man Stewart? This man Stewart, as you call him, is a friend of mine; I'd give—what wouldn't I give?—I really believe that I'd give pretty nearly everything I have to know where he is just now, to know just where to find him!"

## The Romance of a

"Upon my word!—what's the man to you?"

Something in his tone seemed to cause her to consider him more carefully. Standing very daintily erect, as she had a trick of doing, she favoured him in silence, with a scrutiny which he seemed to find embarrassing. When she spoke her tone was almost suspiciously sweet.

"By the way, Bob, what are you doing here?"

"That's the question I want to put to you; it's to put that question I've come here."

"Indeed? Then did you expect to find me here?"

"No, I didn't; I—I expected to find that man Stewart."

"Please don't speak of my friend Mr. Stewart, as that man Stewart; that's the second time you've done it. I shouldn't like him to speak to me of you as that man Wandsworth; though, to do him justice, he would be incapable of such bad manners."

One reason why the Marquis of Wandsworth had not been over hasty to take a wife was because, after a fashion, he was afraid of women; or rather, perhaps, it should be written, of the better ones among them. He felt in some vague, disquieting way, that he was no match for them; they used weapons with which he was not proficient. Ever since his first meeting with her in Hyde Park he had been uncomfortably conscious that he was no match for Diana Chiltern. His notions of wooing were his own. He considered that it only ought to be necessary for him to tell a woman that he wished her to become his wife; all that remained for her to do was to make ready to become his wife on the day he might appoint. In this matter not only was Miss Chiltern not at all of his way of thinking,

## Maid of Honour

but she persisted in regarding his stand-point as if it were merely a humorous pose. The more in earnest he became the more amused she grew ; yet under cover of her amusement she managed to inflict on him sundry, what might be called pin-pricks, which, slight though they were, he found extremely galling ; so galling indeed, that each time he encountered her, the fear of them kept him in a continual state of nervous apprehension.

He stood on one side of the room ; she on the other ; and he glared at her across the table which divided them as if, realising his inability to cope with her in the cuts and thrusts which are delivered by the tongue, he would dearly have liked to proceed, summarily, to measures of an entirely different, and much more vigorous, kind. She, on her part, getting the better, for the moment, of the agitation which she had seemed, just now, to find uncontrollable, favoured him with one of her most becoming smiles as if she were sublimely unconscious of there being anything peculiar about his hearing.

“Well, Bob, I asked what you were doing here, and you said you had come to see my friend, Mr. Stewart—”

“Your friend !—Who the devil is he ?”

“He’s my friend ; isn’t that enough ? I presume you know him ?”

“I’ve met him ?”

“Isn’t he an altogether delightful person ?”

“What the devil are you doing in his rooms ;—in—in a house like this ?”

“What’s the matter with the house ?”



## The Romance of a

"Di, you're playing with me!—you're always at it!"

"You re' quite right, Bob, and I'll tell you why. I play with you for the reason, I imagine, one would play with a tiger;—I always feel that there are about you most uncomfortable possibilities, and—I don't want to have them forced upon me if I can help. However now I will face them. My mind is full enough of other things, but since it is often cowardly to postpone what must come, I think that now we'll understand each other. What is it you want me to do?"

"You know well enough what it is I want you to do; I've told you often enough; at least I've tried to tell you, because you've a way of interrupting a man which—which—which——"

"Yes; never mind the which;—go on."

"I want you to be my wife; I want you to become the Marchioness of Wandsworth;—there isn't a woman in England who wouldn't jump at the chance, first time of offer, but from the way you've treated me I might have been asking you to swallow a dose of physic,—by George, I might."

"I'd sooner swallow all the physic there is in the world than become the Marchioness of Wandsworth; thank you, Bob. So I understand you. Now please to understand me. The answer I've given you is final; you will accept it as final. You will never mention to me the subject again; because if you ever attempt to do so—I shall cut you dead."

"Cut me dead!—what the devil do you mean?"

"What I say;—please don't use such language in my presence. So now you understand me."

## Maid of Honour

"I'll be hanged if I understand you!—I'll be hanged if I do!"

"I know you're dull; but I can't believe you're so dull as that."

"Is—is it this fellow?"

"Is what—what fellow?"

"Are you treating me in this way because of this brute Stewart, this—this blackguard, this—this damned——"

"Bob, are you going to show me the tiger?" Apparently he was about to treat her to an exhibition of qualities which would have been hardly likely to have endeared him to her; but there was something in her attitude; in her voice; above all in the look, half scornful, half significant, with which she steadily regarded him, which induced him, even at the last moment, to show some glimmering of common sense. He made a visible effort to get the better of the passion which almost mastered him; and, with bloodshot eyes, and tremulous lips, was endeavouring to find decent language with which adequately to express his feelings, when Miss Chiltern moved to the window, with an exclamation. "Here is Mr. Stewart!—just when I most want him!—he's a jewel of a man! Oh, what a weight he's taken off my mind." Suddenly her manner changed. From where he was standing the marquis could see that a third hansom had stopped in front of the house. It seemed that, in her, to his thinking, much too obvious anxiety, she had jumped to a wrong conclusion; she had taken it for granted that it brought the man—and, probably, and although she had not said so, his "friend" Mr. Perkins—whose coming she so ardently desired.

## The Romance of a

As a matter of fact it contained two of the very last persons in the world she expected—or wished—to see. “Why, it’s dad!” she cried. “And good gracious!—Mr. Beissmann’s with him!”

She turned to the marquis, as if demanding from him an explanation, with which, in a fashion, he furnished her.

“So that animal has come, has he? I wondered if he would.”

“Which animal?”

“Beissmann, it’s through him I’m here.”

“Through him? I thought you told me you came to see Mr. Stewart.”

“Because of what he said. He said that you were here all the morning along with that man Stewart; and—and, by Jove, it doesn’t look as if he was far out either.”

“Mr. Beissmann said that I was here this morning with Mr. Stewart? But how did he find that out?”

“So you were here, were you, with him? Di, you—you ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

“Ashamed of myself? Bob! Now I do begin to see, that’s what brought you! Lord Wandsworth, I wonder you dare to stand there and look me in the face! Well!” This final ejaculation represented a long-drawn breath, as if she were clearing her lungs of something which clogged them. “One really doesn’t know one’s friends until the occasion proves them. To think that you should have such thoughts of me, you, Bob Wandsworth! and, apparently, dad as well! dad! it’s—it’s wonderful—and that he should bring with him his friend, Mr. Beissmann, on the same

## Maid of Honour

errand which has brought you! That—that really is beyond everything!”

As the lady delivered herself of what, coming from her lips, sounded like the very last word which could be said, there was a vigorous knocking at Mrs. Driver's front door.

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TWO TELEGRAMS

WHEN Mrs. Driver opened to the new-comers, Miss Chiltern opened the door of Mr. Stewart's sitting-room, and confronted them. It was Lord Roffey who had knocked ; it was he who, when Mrs. Driver appeared, was about to put to her a question ; but when, in the open doorway of the room just inside the passage, he saw his daughter standing, he stopped to stare. She met his startled gaze with a calmness which suggested a mind wholly at ease. See nodded ever so lightly.

"Good-day, dad." Then she said to Mrs. Driver. "This is my father, Lord Roffey. I rather fancy that he has come expecting to see me, owing to a misunderstanding. Do you mind his coming in?" She pretended to become suddenly conscious that he was not alone. "Mr. Beissmann! you! This is an unlooked-for pleasure."

Her feeling on that point seemed to be shared by the gentleman. He took off his hat with an air which was distinctly sheepish.

## Maid of Honour

"Miss Chiltern, I did not expect to be so fortunate as to see you."

If the words were intended to convey a sting nothing in her bearing showed that she suspected that such a thing was possible. Lord Roffey had entered the passage, but Mr. Beissmann remained on the doorstep, as if a little confused. She addressed herself to her father.

"Is Mr. Beissmann going to stay outside?"

"Beissmann? Certainly not! certainly not! Come in, Beissmann!"

She said to Mrs. Driver.

"This is Mr. Beissmann. Do you mind his coming in also? He is an acquaintance of my father's." From the look which was on his face the gentleman alluded to did not altogether relish the lady's description of him as an "acquaintance" of her father's; which, perhaps, was what she intended. She was holding the sitting-room door invitingly open. "This is Mr. Stewart's sitting-room. I don't know what Mrs. Driver will think of such a numerous intrusion, still less what Mr. Stewart would think. But, as he and I are such excellent friends, I daresay he will forgive me for allowing you, in his absence, to trespass on his privacy."

When her father and Mr. Beissmann had entered she shut the door, to find that they were regarding the Marquis of Wandsworth with what were hardly looks of friendship.

"So you're here, are you?" observed Lord Roffey.

"Certainly I'm here! You knew I'd be here!"

"Of course, dad, you knew he would be here. To what does Mr. Stewart—or to what do I—owe the

## The Romance of a

pleasure of your presence, and particularly of Mr. Beissmann's?"

"Diana, I'm so taken aback that I don't know what to say to you; absolutely don't know what to say. Finding you here, in a place like this, is a dreadful blow, I'm astounded!"

"Are you, dad? Why?"

"In the first place, before I enter on a subject which may be painful, why aren't you at the palace? I understood that you had special duties to perform which would keep you there all day."

"Yes, dad, so I have."

"Then—then why aren't you performing them?"

"Because, to all intents and purposes, I've run away."

"Run away!"

"I suppose that's what it amounts to."

"Diana, are you—are you mad?"

"No, dad, not that I am aware of. Only, you see, dad, it was quite impossible that I should remain at the palace when I had to see Mr. Stewart."

"Diana! what do you mean?"

"That's what I've been asking her!—that's what I want to know!—and that's what I can't find out!"

This interpolation came from the Marquis of Wandsworth. The lady surveyed the excited nobleman with her beatific and exasperating smile.

"Lord Wandsworth—Mr. Beissmann, I have a few words which I wish to say to my father. Would you both of you mind waiting in the hall, or on the steps, or on the pavement, or, if you like, you needn't wait at all; while I say what I have to say to him in private? Permit me to open the door."

She opened the door. Beissmann passed instantly

## Maid of Honour

through it, with a smile for which she could have pinched him; his smiling silence seemed to her to be much more irritatingly significant than his lordship's vigorous speech. The marquis seemed reluctant to follow the other's example.

"Look here, Di, don't you think I'm going to let you play the fool with me!"

"Bob—the door!"

"Don't you imagine for a single instant——"

"I imagine nothing—the door!"

"Very well, your conduct's all of a piece! but you only wait till I do meet that scoundrelly blackguard, Stewart!"

As if his feelings were too strong for him he marched out of the room leaving his sentence apparently unfinished. As soon as she had shut him out the front door was opened, noisily.

"That's Bob! perhaps he's going to wait upon the steps, that's wise of him, no doubt the air will do him good. Now, dad, what is there you would like to say to me? As I thought that it might be of a confidential nature I felt that you might prefer to say it to me when we were quite alone. What is it, dad?"

"Diana, I give you my word that you amaze me."

"Is that all?"

"The way you treat a man like Beissmann——"

"Never mind Mr. Beissmann. Surely you haven't come to talk to me about Mr. Beissmann—I know all you can possibly tell me about him."

"Diana, you're—you're——"

"Yes, I know I am, you've told me that once or twice before. Isn't there anything else?"

"Who's this man Stewart?"



## The Romance of a

"This man Stewart—you have Bob's unhappy way of alluding to him—is my very good friend."

"But who is he? It is not sufficient for you to tell me that he's what you call your good friend, that tells me nothing. I insist upon you informing me who he is, what he is, and—and all about him."

"I'm afraid I can't do that, I don't know all about him. A girl seldom does know all about a man." She sighed, as if her ignorance troubled her. "But I will tell you one thing, dad, you are wrong if you suppose that I came here to see Mr. Stewart."

"Diana, I hope—I trust that you're not going to try to throw dust in my eyes!"

"Not at all, I assure you. But I am going to make to you a serious communication. Dad, the truth is—and it will surprise you—I'm in a frightfully complicated position."

"What do you mean? Diana, do you want to bring on one of my old attacks?"

"Listen, dad. If you were the kind of father which you are not I should have confided in you before; but—you're not that kind of father, are you?"

"How dare you talk to me like this?"

"I do dare. Since I am, practically, an orphan——"

"An orphan! when you've me!"

"You really don't count, now, dad, do you? Arthur's more of a father to me than you are."

"I don't know what young women are coming to, I do not know! When—when I was young——"

"That's exactly it, you are young. I always look upon you as a kind of younger brother."

"Diana!"

"Dad, I really do. However, let us go on with what

## Maid of Honour

I was saying. When I find myself in a position in which a mother's advice would be invaluable, I have, practically, no one to whom I can turn. I admit that, on the whole, up to the present, I have mothered myself fairly well, but, at last, I've mothered myself into a muddle."

"What have you been doing; I insist upon your telling me."

"You needn't insist, I am going to tell you of my own free will. Yesterday afternoon I received a telegram from the King of Idalia."

"From whom?"

"From the King of Idalia."

"The King of——!"

"Dad, will you let me go on? You heard perfectly well what I said. One reason why I always regard you as a younger brother is because you never will let me say what I have to say in peace; you will keep interrupting." Lord Roffey gasped, as if he felt that this young woman was beyond him altogether. She went on with a matter of fact air which was ominous, entirely ignoring the emotions which came more and more to the front on his visage as she proceeded. "As I have already remarked, when I was interrupted, yesterday afternoon I received a telegram from the King of Idalia, saying that he was coming to London to see me——"

"To see you!"

"Dad!—He said that he would arrive in London this morning. The telegram was unexpected; the intimation that he was already on the way, coming in such a form, took me by surprise; the time was so short; I didn't know what to do——"

## The Romance of a

"I should think not;—if you're in earnest."

She sighed.

"If I'm in earnest! That's the sort of comment you offer when I make to you a serious communication; which explains why it was impossible for me to come to you in my hour of need; you would no doubt have said something equally to the point if I had, and probably have thought you'd done enough. I didn't feel like going to Arthur; I knew he mightn't understand; there wasn't time to explain, and besides, I didn't want to explain."

"Really, Diana, its inconceivable to me—"

"Dad!—So I went for help to Mr. Douglas Stewart."

"Who on earth is Douglas Stewart? How many more times am I to ask?"

"The form in which you put your question is unfortunate; and please don't be violent. Violence doesn't become you. I always think that you look your best when you're in repose—dear Dad!"

"This girl—this girl—"

"Dear Dad, never mind this girl. I am going to tell you who Mr. Stewart is, on earth." She sat with her gloved hands clasped on the table in front of her, and as she twiddled her thumbs round and round each other she looked down at them gravely. "Mr. Stewart is a friend whose acquaintance I made under—I really think I'm entitled to say—somewhat romantic circumstances."

"What the deuce do you call romantic circumstances?"

## Maid of Honour

"Dad!—for shame!—you're so inquisitive! Can one have no privacies?—I saw enough of him, at the time of making his acquaintances, to inspire me with a sincere fondness for him—"

"Diana!"

"A sincere fondness; a considerable degree of respect,—it is so seldom nowadays one meets a man in whom one sees anything one can respect; and a large amount of confidence. When I received that telegram I knew directly that he was the one person in the world to whom I could turn for help."

"I take it that that depended upon what was the nature of the help you wanted."

"Precisely;—you've hit it;—I should have said that I knew he was the one person in the world to whom I could turn for just the hand of help I wanted;—so I turned. I knew that he would do his utmost to shield me from all inconvenience; ask no questions; show no impertinent curiosity; and carry out my instructions, at whatever cost to himself, to the letter."

"This appears to be a distinctly remarkable young man."

"Arn't I trying to tell you that he's a remarkable young man?"

"Some people would call him a—"

His lordship stopped short; she tried to induce him to carry his sentence to a finish—

"Yes, Dad; some people would call him a—?"

He declined to be drawn.

"Go on! go on!—go on with your amazing story!"

"I asked him to meet the king."

## The Romance of a

"All by himself?"

"Certainly; that was the essential condition; that he should meet him alone."

"Of all the extraordinary state of affairs!"

"He did meet him, this morning. He brought him here."

"Here!—here! The—king of Idalia—to—to this hole!"

"He has the rooms above."

"Good—good heavens!"

"I came here to see him, not to see Mr. Stewart. The interview I had with him was not—not, I think, quite what had been expected on either side. I returned to the palace, disturbed in my mind."

"You don't say so!"

"I do say so;—I was disturbed in my mind! Why do you look at me like that? You may imagine, therefore, what were my feelings when, just as it came to be my turn to be in attendance, and I was just going to the queen, I received this telegram."

Taking a pink slip of paper from between the buttons of her bodice she extended it to her father. He unfolded it, looked at it, then at her, then at it again, then he read it aloud, in a tone which suggested total lack of comprehension.

"'If Mr. Perkins remains at Walham Green to-night in the morning he will be a dead man. You may rely on this implicitly. If you doubt it let him stay the night. Only do not say you had no warning.' There's no signature."

"I know there isn't."

"Who the deuce is Mr. Perkins?"

## Maid of Honour

**"That's the king."**

**"Who's the king?"**

**"Mr. Perkins."**

**His lordship sat down, as if his feelings had reached a stage at which it was impossible for him to endure them any longer standing. He stared at his daughter with a dazed expression, as if he only saw her through the thick of a mist; indeed his whole bearing was that of a man who was lost, mentally, morally, and physically, in a fog, through which he saw no glimmer of light which might serve him as a guide.**

**"Diana, either you've been concocting a most disreputable fairy tale, or you've been playing the chief part in what may turn out to be the most monstrous scandal of modern times, and which may be the ruin of all of us."**

**She remained quite unmoved. The ravishing smile with which she regarded him had all the outward semblance of a mind at ease.**

**"Dear dad, you are so conventional. Unloose the torrents of your eloquence on me at some future time; but, if Mr. Stewart were here, he'd act not talk. Can't you—follow Mr. Stewart, even though it is at a little distance? Can't you tell me what to do?"**

**"Mr. Stewart! that man—"**

**"Yes, dear dad, you're perfectly correct; you always are; but—you understand what that telegram means?"**

**"No, I'll be hanged if I do!"**

**"It seems to mean that someone knows who Mr. Perkins really is; that there's a plot on foot for his assassination; and that it'll be executed if he remains in town to-night."**

## The Romance of a

"A delightful state of affairs, upon my honour. And for all this you're responsible!"

"Unless it's a joke."

"A joke! a thing like that!"

"You see it is an anonymous telegram, and—one never knows. Oh I wish I knew what it really means! Dad, what do you think it means?"

"Where's His Majesty now?"

"Do you suppose if I knew I'd be here talking to you? That's the serious part of it. He's out somewhere with Mr. Stewart, but nobody seems to have a notion where; and, if he really is known, they may be assassinating him at this very moment."

"Diana, is it your deliberate intention to drive me mad? You know what an effect undue agitation has on me——! Hollo, who's this? Let's hope, for all our sakes, it's your two friends."

"This" was still another hansom. But again Miss Chiltern was doomed to disappointment. This time the person who alighted was a stranger; a tall, well-set, wiry man, with iron grey hair. The Marquis of Wandsworth was lounging on the pavement, and Mr. Beissman on the steps; having, apparently, had enough of the passage. If they did not know him he knew them, at least by sight, because as they drew aside to let him pass, taking off his hat, he addressed each of them by name. When he reached the top of the steps Lord Roffey was standing in the open door of the sitting-room, as if he took it for granted that the visit was meant for him. However that might have been, taking the open door to be an invitation to enter, hat in hand he walked straight into the sitting-room;

## Maid of Honour

recognising him as he did so, as readily as he had done the pair without.

“Lord Roffey, I am Philip Cloudesley, of the Intelligence Department; and I am here in consequence of a telegram which has been received at Scotland Yard.”



# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE THIRD TELEGRAM

MR. CLOUDESLEY'S introduction of himself, and explanation of his presence were followed by several seconds during which nobody spoke. Lord Roffey and Miss Chiltern stared at him inside the room; the Marquis of Wandsworth and Mr. Beissman who, it seemed, had followed him up the steps, stared at him in the open doorway. It was the lady who broke the silence; and the first remarks she made were addressed to the gentlemen who stood at the door. She spoke sweetly, but with a touch of that acidity which is associated sometimes even with sweetness.

"Bob, do you think we need keep you any longer? And you, Mr. Beissmann? I don't understand what it is either of you thinks he's waiting for; hadn't you—both of you—better go?"

Had anyone told the Marquis of Wandsworth, not long ago, that there would come a time when he would dance attendance upon a woman, and even force his presence upon her after she had told him, as plainly as courtesy permitted, that it was unwelcome, he would

## Maid of Honour

have laughed him to scorn, if he had not adopted more vigorous methods of expressing his feelings. Yet—he declined to take the something more than hint which Miss Chiltern had given him.

“Don’t you worry about me. When I feel like going I’ll go; but just at present I feel like waiting a little longer.”

“If Miss Chiltern permits,” said Mr. Beissman, with that smile for which she could again have pinched him, “I attend Lord Roffey.”

But Lord Roffey declined to so trespass on his patience.

“That’s all right, Beissmann, it’s very good of you, but don’t you hang about for me; in fact, I’d rather you didn’t. I shall see you probably in the course of the day, anyhow you shall hear from me. And—and Wandsworth, don’t you stay. I may inform you, gentlemen, that there’s been a misconception. Miss Chiltern did not come here for the purpose we supposed. I am not in a position to explain further at this moment. Should I find myself in that position—eh—later on, I—I shall not fail to do so. In the meantime, as I have matters of the greatest importance to discuss with my daughter, may I ask you both to leave us?”

The marquis spoke first; this was plain enough speaking even for him.

“Oh, there’s been a misconception, has there? I don’t know what it is, but I shall be glad to hear any explanation you may have to offer, when it’s convenient. We’ll have a little straight talk together at the same time.”

The last words almost sounded as if they were a threat. The speaker—always with an air of dudgeon

## The Romance of a

—took himself down the steps, into the hansom which had brought him, and away. Mr. Beissmann, on the other hand, took his leave with the smile which the lady so much resented.

“Ten thousands pardons if my presence has incommoded Miss Chiltern; I remove myself at once. I look forward, Lord Roffey, to the pleasure of seeing you very soon again; you know always where I am to be found.”

As, with a low bow to the lady, he closed the door and departed, Miss Chiltern bit her lip; she looked as if she would have said a good deal, but was conscious that it was the part of wisdom to refrain. Instead, before her father had time to collect his apparently scattered faculties, turning to the new-comer she addressed him with a degree of acerbity which he certainly had done nothing to deserve.

“You say you are Mr. Cloudesley? And you come from—where do you say you come from?”

“I have a position in the Intelligence Department.”

“I don’t quite know what the Intelligence Department is, but I suppose it’s all right; is it all right, dad?”

“I—I can’t say I know much about the matter, but—I believe there is such a department. Perhaps Mr. Cloudesley will explain. Mr. Cloudesley, this is my daughter, Miss Chiltern.” The gentlemen bowed. “You said something about a telegram in connection with Scotland Yard.”

“A telegram has just been received which, as it is anonymous, would not have been regarded as of much importance had it not come across the wires in a private code which is known to only a very few persons; and those persons in whom we have the highest confidence. It is to the effect that the King of Idalia is in London;

## Maid of Honour

at this address ; and that a plot is on foot to assassinate him if he remains here overnight."

"Then it's true! it's not a joke! Look at this!"

She held out to him the despatch which she had herself received. He read it.

"Mr. Perkins? Who is Mr. Perkins?"

"That is the name under which the king has chosen to pass."

"Is he actually in this house?"

"Not at this second; I only wish he were. He's gone out somewhere with Mr. Stewart."

"And who is Mr. Stewart?"

The door opened to admit the gentlemen in question. The lady moved towards him with a cry of welcome.

"This is Mr. Stewart! Oh, Mr. Stewart, how glad I am to see you! What a burden you have lifted off my mind! Oh, Mr. Stewart, this—this is my father, Lord Roffey; and this is Mr. Cloudesley; I don't quite know who Mr. Cloudesley is, but no doubt he'll tell you all about it himself. Mr. Stewart, where is Mr. Perkins?"

The young man looked at her with startled eyes.

"Mr. Perkins! Isn't he here?"

"Here? in this room?"

"Not necessarily in this room, but—but in the house?"

"You know he's not in the house! How can he be when he went out with you?"

"Yes, he went out; but—hasn't he returned?"

"Of course he hasn't! Haven't you brought him back with you?"

"I thought—I hoped he would have come back by himself. If he hasn't I'm afraid I don't know what has become of him, where he is."

## The Romance of a

He seemed bewildered. Possibly it was anxiety which made the lady all at once unjust.

"I trusted you, and this is how you have used me! Didn't I tell you not to let him out of your sight, and didn't you promise to do exactly as I told you? and this is how you have kept your promise! If he is lost, if anything has happened to him, I will never forgive you; you will never forgive yourself! He is the King of Idalia."

"I guessed it, or rather the fact was forced upon me in a fashion which made it impossible for me to misunderstand. There—there has been an attempt to assassinate him."

"Oh Mr. Stewart! To assassinate him! Is he dead?"

They were all three at him at once. The lady had grown white; in an instant all her pretty colour had gone; one could see that she was trembling.

"Not so far as I am aware of; that is—perhaps you will allow me to explain."

"What do you mean, not so far as you are aware of? Is he hurt? is he dangerously wounded?"

The lady's gloved hands were clenched.

"I am afraid that unless you let me explain——"

"Explain! what is there to explain? Answer my question!"

Lord Roffey intervened.

"It seems to me, Diana, that there is a good deal to explain; I am bound to say that unless you behave reasonably, and give Mr. Stewart the opportunity he asks for, I for one shall be able to understand nothing; and for goodness' sake don't bully the man till you know what you are bullying him for!"

## Maid of Honour

"Bully him! Dad!"

"Yes, bully him, I use the word advisedly! Pray continue, Mr. Stewart; at any rate you will find me all attention."

Mr. Cloudesley put in a word.

"If you will permit me to offer a suggestion, Mr. Stewart. Begin at the beginning, Mr. Stewart, and tell us as briefly, and as clearly as you can, exactly what has occurred."

The lady looked at her father, at Mr. Cloudesley, above all, she looked at Douglas Stewart. On her white face, in her big, wide-open eyes, in her whole bearing, there was something which cut him to the heart. In spite of his own agitation he was dimly conscious that he had never seen her look more lovely. It was to her he spoke.

"I went out with Mr. Perkins and Miss Moore."

"Who's Miss Moore?"

This was the lady. She aimed the question at him as if it were a missile; he winced, as if it had struck him.

"She's—she's a friend of mine."

"Does Mr. Perkins know her?"

"He met her here."

"Here? In this room?"

"In this room."

"What was she doing here?"

"She came to see me."

"To see you? At your invitation?"

"No, not—not at my precise invitation; but—she does some times come to see me."

"Sometimes? Indeed! Go on!"

"Mr. Perkins came in and saw her here; he insisted upon her going out with him."

## The Romance of a

"Insisted on her going out with him! A perfect stranger!"

"Mr. Perkins has a way of his own of making rapid progress with a chance acquaintance."

"How dare you?"

"I beg your pardon; I—I meant nothing."

The lady seemed to have flamed into sudden fury; the young man stared at her aghast; just as suddenly becoming conscious that she had been guilty of a slight error in tactics, her dignity suffered a temporary eclipse.

"Who said you did? Go on with your absurd story! So your friend Miss Moore went out with him."

"We all three of us went out together; Mr. Perkins insisted on riding on the top of an omnibus."

"The King of Idalia on the top of an omnibus!"

"It appears to me," interposed her father, "that His Majesty is capable of much more remarkable things than riding on the top of an omnibus."

"May I be permitted to hint that it is desirable that this gentleman should tell his own story, with as few interruptions as possible?"

This was Mr. Cloudesley. The lady instantly recognised that the "hint" was indeed for her.

"I don't wish to interrupt Mr. Stewart; pray don't let any one imagine for a moment that I do."

She sat down on a chair, bolt-upright, her hands clasped on her knees in front of her, gazing fixedly at Mr. Stewart, with reproachful eyes which distressed that rather ill-used young man more than any words could possibly have done. It was with difficulty that he managed to proceed.

## Maid of Honour

"We—we got on a 'bus, and—and Mr. Perkins and Miss Moore sat together on the front seat." The lady's lips parted, as if she was disposed to comment on this piece of information; but they closed again as she flashed a fleeting glance at Mr. Cloudesley. "A man on the seat behind tried to stab him. It so happened that Miss Moore moved at the moment, and that, in consequence, the blow which was meant for him, struck her."

"And killed her?"

This, once more, was the lady.

"No, not—not at the time."

"Is she dead since?"

"Fortunately she is not."

"Is she dangerously wounded?"

"Miss Chiltern!"

This interruption came from Mr. Cloudesley; the lady, still bolt-upright on her chair, resented it.

"I've already told you that I have not the slightest wish to interrupt; but Mr. Stewart is so slow, and he leaves out just those things you want to know; you have to ask him questions."

The meek young man for the first time made some show of self-defence.

"I trust, Miss Chiltern, that you'll forgive me, but if you'll only let me tell my tale my own way I'll be as quick as I possibly can; and, if I can help it, I won't leave out anything which is of interest."

"Oh pray, Mr. Stewart, go on; don't mind me—"

But it was evident that he did not mind her, more than was good for him. However, he did go on.

"As she fell I caught Miss Moore in my arms."

"In your arms?"



## The Romance of a

This interruption really was uncalled for ; each of the three men felt it ; but the lady remained unmoved.

"In my arms. The would-be assassin jumped over the side of the 'bus on to the road ; in the confusion he escaped."

"Escaped !"

"We managed, between us, to carry Miss Moore down. Presently a doctor came along in his brougham. He offered to drive her home. We lifted her into the brougham. He wanted me to accompany her, and— and she wanted me also."

"Was she conscious ?"

"She had been insensible, but she had returned to consciousness. For the first time since the thing had happened I looked round and found that Mr. Perkins had vanished."

"What do you mean by vanished ?"

"I had taken it for granted all the while that he was at my elbow. When I looked among the crowd and found that he was nowhere in sight I was taken aback ; I called to him but he didn't answer ; I didn't know what to do."

"What did you do ?"

"The doctor said that it was of the first importance that Miss Moore should be kept calm ; that the consequences, if I refused to accompany her, would be most serious ; she is a very old, and a very dear friend of mine, I couldn't bear to think that anything should happen to her on my account ; or—for the matter of that on any account, she had borne enough already ; so I went with them in the brougham."

"And left the king—knowing him to be the king—at the mercy of an assassin ?"

## Maid of Honour

"Miss Chiltern, you are not entitled to say that ; you are unjust."

"Am I? I can only assure you, Mr. Stewart, that had I not heard it from your own lips I should not have supposed that you were capable of such an action."

"Diana ! Diana ! Your criticism is uncalled-for, monstrous ! Supposing you were in the place of this young lady, that you had been nearly killed instead of somebody else, that your life hung by a thread, and that Mr. Stewart behaved to you as he behaved to her, I— I think you would pronounce an entirely different judgment ; have a little charity !"

Miss Chiltern, who had risen from her chair, stood with her head in the air, as if charity was the last thing she wanted to have anything to do with. Her father transferred his attention to Mr. Stewart.

"I trust, sir, that when you arrived with this young lady at her home it was discovered that she had not suffered very serious injury."

"Serious enough. She had been stabbed twice."

"Twice !"

"The scoundrel in his rage at having the first blow intercepted, struck at her a second time ; the second blow was worse than the first. When we got her home she had swooned again, and was so weak from loss of blood that for some time it was feared that she had passed beyond recovery ; I could not come away while she hung between life and death."

"Of course you could do nothing of the kind ! Certainly not ! You did quite right !"

"Her mother is an old lady and is herself in delicate health, the shock almost killed her ! she would not let me go, I dared not leave her, I had to stop ! I rushed

## The Romance of a

away at the earliest possible moment, hoping to find that Mr. Perkins had come back here, or at least to find that there were news of him."

"No doubt you'll soon have news of him. The probability is that when that assassin got within reach of him again and found that he was wholly without protection, he made sure."

"Diana, I am ashamed of you ; I cannot think why you allow yourself to say such things !"

Judging from Miss Chiltern's demeanour it was a matter of utter indifference to her what her father thought, or any one else either. She was evidently in a very curious mood. Douglas Stewart stared at her as if he found it difficult to credit that this imperious, unreasonable, and ungenerous damsel was his Lady of the Sands. Mr. Cloudesley took advantage of the brief pause to gather together the loose threads of the young man's story in his own fashion.

"When, exactly, did this scene on the omnibus take place ?"

"I cannot tell you the exact minute, but probably somewhere between half-past one and two."

"And it is now nearly five ; so there has been time for many things to have happened since."

"Of course there has."

This was the lady, but she went unheeded.

"The king got off the omnibus at the same time as you did ?"

"Certainly ; he helped me to carry Miss Moore down."

"You are sure of that ?"

"Absolutely certain."

"He didn't get on again ?"

## Maid of Honour

"I should say not; I've an impression that practically the entire 'bus was taken into custody."

"You mean that the police came on the scene?"

"Very much so. They took my address, and Miss Moore's address, and I have an idea the address of every creature on the 'bus."

"Did you tell them who the person you speak of as Mr. Perkins was?"

"Not I, I never mentioned him. I was afraid that any moment Miss Moore might die in my arms. One policeman was pestering me with questions; another wanted to take her to the hospital—when she heard the word hospital she became hysterical—I thought it would have been the end of her; it certainly would have been if they had tried to take her; I don't mind owning that so far as I was concerned I was half off my head."

"Entirely natural, Mr. Stewart, perfectly natural."

This was Lord Roffey. As he spoke he glared at his daughter; who at the same moment was gazing into space; as if the proceedings interested her no more.

"Then you don't know if the police spoke to—Mr. Perkins?"

"I do not."

"They may have done for all you know."

"They may. Just then I was oblivious to his existence; except that in a hazy sort of way I seemed to have taken it for granted that all the while he was at my elbow; when it appears he wasn't."

"Exactly how long was it between his getting off the omnibus with you and your discovery that he was missing?"

## The Romance of a

"I can't tell you exactly; a few minutes; perhaps three or four; it may be a little more or a little less."

"You are certain that he was nowhere in sight when you got into the doctor's brougham?"

"I can only tell you I didn't see him—I had no time to investigate closely; the doctor bundled me in; he would have it that every moment might mean the difference between life and death."

"Precisely; and the doctor did quite right; he was the proper person to judge."

This again was Lord Roffey.

"Now you have had time to think things over, Mr. Stewart, have you no idea what may have become of—Mr. Perkins?"

"No more than you have; except that I am bound to agree with Miss Chiltern in thinking that it is more than possible that something very serious may have happened. I have reason to believe that certain persons who may be described, without doing them much injustice, as anarchists, were aware that he was coming to London."

"What reason have you to believe anything of the kind?"

This was the lady.

"It would take me too long to explain just now—"

"Explain later, Mr. Stewart; go on."

This was Mr Cloudesley.

"I knew that his arrival at Victoria was witnessed by several members of a society which I have been given to understand has been responsible for more than one political murder; they have been dogging his footsteps ever since; one of them followed him

## Maid of Honour

on that omnibus, and he was only by a miracle saved from assassination; the possibilities are only too obvious that so soon as he was off the omnibus they again marked him as their prey, and that he has either fallen by their hands, or into them."

"And knowing this, you left him at their mercy!"

"Now Diana! Mr. Stewart was not a free agent! He was helpless."

Mr. Cloudesley took out a note-book.

"I am going to telephone to all the police stations in London. I must ask you, Mr. Stewart, to give me as minute a description as possible of Mr. Perkins. If he is alive, and a free man, we ought to have news of him before night."

"And if he is not alive?"

"Miss Chiltern, please don't let's anticipate the worst. Now, sir, your description; to begin with, what was he wearing?"

Douglas Stewart's thoughts immediately reverting to the frock coat and top hat which he had paid for, he was about to commence his catalogue with them when there came a sharp rat-tat at the front door, like a post-man's knock. He immediately rushed to the door; presently returning with a yellow envelope in his hand. While they watched him, with eager eyes, tearing it open, he read aloud the telegram which it contained.

"'Dear Mr. Stewart. I take your excellent advice and return to my mother. My holiday is ended. I have not liked it very much. I do not think I shall ever have another. Do not trouble about me. All is quite well. I go to my mother with your twenty pounds.—BILL PERKINS.' This telegram," Mr. Stewart went on to say, when he had finished reading,

## The Romance of a

**" was dispatched from Folkestone ; which makes it look as if Mr. Perkins left Charing Cross by the afternoon boat train ; in which case he should be already nearly at Boulogne.—Let us hope that, as he says, all is quite well with him."**

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE END OF HIS HOLIDAY

MR. PERKINS had found himself more than once in what to him was a curious situation since he had left his motor car undergoing repair on that country road, and taken that lengthy stroll; but when, having rendered Douglas Stewart what assistance he could in bearing Miss Moore from the top of the omnibus on to the road he stood in the street surrounded, hustled, bustled, pushed this way and that by the most remarkable set of persons he had ever beheld, he realised quite clearly that that was the most singular position he ever yet had known. He had just escaped death, not only as the phrase has it, by the skin of his teeth, but also for all he could tell, at the expense of a woman's life. She lay on the ground at that moment hidden by that surging, excited crowd, perhaps dying—if she was not already dead. There was something else of which he was aware, that he had not escaped yet. He had had his experiences, and he had been told things—circumstances had rendered it absolutely necessary that he should be told. He knew that there were people in the world who had sworn to kill him, who would



## The Romance of a

cheerfully lose their own lives for the sake of taking his, if they could only get the chance. Some of them might still be in his own country, even in his own capital, but all that was humanly possible had been done to drive them beyond his borders and it was believed that practically they had all been driven away. He remembered to have been told it was known that, for the most part, these miscreants had taken refuge in London. When on the top of the omnibus he had looked round and seen the man sitting on the seat behind him and caught his eyes he remembered. He knew instantly as if it had been shouted at him from the skies that the man meant to kill him.

That was an odd situation for him. All the days of his life he had been guarded, sometimes by soldiers, sometimes by police, always by someone. In other words, always until then, it had been somebody else's business to defend him, it had never been necessary for him to defend himself. Now that it was necessary he did not know what to do. The position was entirely novel; he was even unable to tell any one of the peril he was in, he could only sit still and wait. But because the fate which had been meant for him had fallen on somebody else, it by no means followed that he was safe; of that he was perfectly aware. Any one of these persons who were so uncereemoniously crowding on him as if he were some creature of the gutter might have in his hand the messenger of death, and this time it was not likely that it would go to the wrong address. Ragamuffins hemmed him in on all sides; totally unused to crowds it seemed to him that there was something sinister in their unthinking roughness, in the manner in which they used him as if he were

## Maid of Honour

one of themselves. At any moment one of them—he had not the faintest notion which—might strike, and on this occasion, for him it would be the finish. He was no coward, this last of a long line of kings, he caught himself smiling, as he wondered from what quarter—when—the blow would come, and as he found that he was smiling, he smiled still more. That he should be butchered by some unknown blackguard in the midst of such a rabble! After all it was droll.

When, all at once, a voice addressed him in his own language, (the instinct of self-preservation coming suddenly to the fore) he twirled round as quickly as he could, prepared to meet and, if he could, defend himself against, a fresh assailant; the smile still on his face. But the words had been hardly those of an enemy; and the speaker did not look like one who would commit murder in the open street. He was elderly; had all the appearance of a gentleman; was well-groomed, well-dressed; with something about him which suggested that he was, in an unusual sense, a citizen of the world. He had said, "If your Majesty will permit me to have the honour to escort you, I will relieve you of the annoyance which must be occasioned you by this somewhat unmannerly crowd."

Mr. Perkins, perceiving with half an eye that this was scarcely the sort of person who might be expected to butcher him then and there, replied, also in his own language:—

"You know me? Who are you?"

"My name is Cottrell. I know your Majesty very well by sight. If you will keep close to me." The crowd parting in front of the stranger, the pair reached a part of the street which was comparatively empty.

## The Romance of a

A hansom was standing by the kerb. The stranger motioned towards it with his hand. "Your Majesty permits that I place my hansom at your service?"

Mr. Perkins was regarding him attentively.

"You speak my language very well, Mr. Cottrell; I have never heard it spoken so well by one who was not my countryman; yet—you are English?"

The stranger acknowledged the compliment with an inclination of his head.

"Your Majesty does me too much honour; it is true that I am English. If you will allow me to suggest, sir, I do not think it desirable that you should stand too long in the open street. You may be known to others, as well as to me, and—you may find that rather inconvenient."

Mr. Perkins laughed, that easy laugh of his; the laugh of a boy.

"I have found it inconvenient already; if it were not for a young lady I should be lying on the road, instead of standing on my feet. Therefore, with your permission, Mr. Cottrell, I will get into your hansom; only—where will it take me?"

"Where, sir, do you wish to go?"

"That is the question. I do not find it easy to answer. I know, Mr. Cottrell, what I will do. I will do what a friend advised me to do. I will return to my mother, but I am afraid that your hansom will not take me so far."

Mr. Perkins held his hands to his sides, so that his elbows stuck out, and laughed again. People turned to look at this light-hearted boy. Mr. Cottrell took out his watch.

"If you will permit me, sir, to say so, your friend's

## Maid of Honour

advice is most excellent. My hansom will at least take you the first stage of your journey. The afternoon boat train leaves Charing Cross at two-twenty ; if, sir, you will take your seat at once we shall have plenty of time to catch it."

"You will accompany me, Mr. Cottrell, as far as Charing Cross?"

"If, sir, you permit it." The two climbed in; the hansom started. "What arrangements, sir, would you wish to have made about your luggage?"

"I have with me all the luggage which I brought to London; indeed I have a hat and a coat which I did not bring; they are a present from a friend; however I leave him a hat and a coat, so it is a fair exchange."

The hansom had gone some little distance before Mr. Cottrell spoke again.

"If you will allow me, sir, there is something which I should like to say to you."

"Say what you please, Mr. Cottrell. I could not stop you if I would; and I would not if I could."

Although accorded the required permission Mr. Cottrell seemed to experience some difficulty in finding the precise words with which to clothe what he wished to say.

"At the risk of appearing presumptuous, sir, I would suggest that when you return to the queen, your mother, you say nothing, if you can help it, to her, or to anyone, of where you have been."

"You can trust me to say nothing; if, as you have it, I can help it; and I think I can. I am not entirely a fool. I fancy, Mr. Cottrell, that you know something of my private affairs."

His bright eyes were fixed upon the other's face;

## The Romance of a

within them, a shrewd look which made of him, all at once, more of a man. Mr. Cottrell, looking steadily ahead, as if unconscious of there being anything singular in the young man's scrutiny, went gingerly on ; one felt that he looked at each word carefully before it was uttered.

"Up to this moment, sir, your presence in town is known only to a very few persons—"

"It is known to some? I mean—to whom it is known? Can you tell me, Mr. Cottrell, to whom it is known?"

"I would ask you, sir, to believe that it is impossible for a king to move out of his own palace without its being known to somebody. For me to pretend that I am able to tell you to whom it is known would be ridiculous. But of this I can assure you ; if your majesty chooses to keep your own counsel—it will be known to no one."

Mr. Perkins still stared hard at the speaker ; who continued to appear unconscious that he was being looked at ; and again the young man laughed.

"It occurs to me that you are a strange person, Mr. Cottrell. You drop on to me out of the skies, and—you seem to hint that it is out of the skies you have dropped."

Mr. Cottrell asked, as the hansom turned into the station yard :—

"Is it your wish, sir, that I should accompany you part of the distance, or the whole?"

Mr. Perkins shook his head.

"I think not, Mr. Cottrell. I thank you ; but I prefer to travel by myself. I shall be quite all right. You understand it is for me a new experience ; I do not find it unamusing."

## Maid of Honour

"Shall I get your ticket, sir?"

"No, I get it for myself. I have the money." He took from his pocket Douglas Stewart's four five-pound notes. "Where do I buy my ticket?"

Mr. Cottrell led him to the booking-office.

"You book through?"

"No, only to Paris; when I am there I buy myself another ticket; I have been this way before, all alone; I know the ropes; I begin to be a great traveller."

When he had purchased his ticket Mr. Cottrell walked with him towards the platform.

"Shall I see, sir, that a compartment is reserved for you?"

"For me? all by myself? no thank you! I give you my word I am not so fond of my own society. I want a compartment in which there are other people; where there are ladies—nice ladies—with whom I can talk. You understand that I am of a sociable nature."

"You are lightly attired, sir, for a long journey. Will you not have an overcoat? a rug? a cap? There is still time to procure them before the train starts."

"No, I think not; if I want anything I get it for myself. I have the money." He paused before a compartment in which already three persons had taken seats; apparently they were father, mother, daughter; and the daughter was not bad-looking. Turning, he held out both hands to his companion. "I get in here; I wish you a good day, Mr. Cottrell. You have dropped on to me from the skies; I beg you will return to them."

The other was a little taken aback by the easy off-hand fashion with which the younger man dismissed him. He hesitated.

## The Romance of a

"You are sure, sir, that there is nothing I can do for you before I go? nothing I can have arranged for your comfort? If there is, I beg that you will honour me with your commands."

"I shall be all quite right. I am indebted to you for your services, but I require them no more."

This was too plain to permit of any misunderstanding. Mr. Cottrell bowed and retreated. Mr. Perkins instantly turned to his masculine fellow passenger. "It is a very fine afternoon, sir."

The young gentleman must have been a judge of character. Many Britons would have snubbed him; this one was actually genial.

"Distinctly, we ought to have a good crossing."

"We shall have an excellent crossing. I had an excellent crossing last night."

"Did you cross last night from Paris?"

"From Paris."

"And you're crossing again—to Paris?"

"To Paris and beyond. You understand I have come to London for a little holiday."

"It must have been an uncommonly little holiday if you arrived this morning and are going back this afternoon."

"Yes, it has been an uncommonly little holiday, yet I am not sure that it has not been large enough. Which is the more droll, since it is the only holiday I have ever had in all my life."

"The only holiday!—You're joking!"

"No, I am not joking, not this time. It is the only holiday I have ever had in all my life. I think that every person ought to have a holiday some time."

This last part of his sentence was addressed to the

## Maid of Honour

young lady who was standing in the open doorway. She laughed; which enabled one to see how pretty she really was.

"I'm quite of your opinion; only I'm afraid that half a day would'nt be long enough for me."

Mr. Cottrell, who had by no means quitted the station, had taken up his stand where he could see all that went on while he himself was not very obvious. When he saw that young lady laugh he understood what the young man meant by saying that he was of a sociable nature.

The journey to Folkestone was quite a pleasant one. They talked the whole way, all four of them. Mr. Perkins entertained his company vastly, though, if they had only known it, they entertained him more. When they reached the harbour, Mr. Perkins despatched two telegrams entrusting them to the lad who was in waiting on the quay. One, which was to Mr. Douglas Stewart, we have seen already. The second, which was to Diana Chiltern, had brevity. "Since it is already the end of my holiday I wish you good-bye. —BILL PERKINS." When he got on board he rejoined his companions of the train. As the boat was starting he took off his silk hat.

"I salute your country, Miss Hale." In some extraordinary way he was already in possession of the young woman's name. "It is perhaps the last time I see it."

"If I were you," said her father, "I should try to get rid of that hat of yours. When we get outside you'll find there's more breeze than you suppose. See if you can't get a cap from the steward."

"It is a good idea, I go to see."



## The Romance of a

He went to see, with his hat in his hand.

"That's a remarkable young man," said the father.

The daughter observed, "I think he's most amusing."

For some moments the mother was still, then she said, "He has fine eyes, there is a story in them."

It is possible that she was more romantic than she looked; we will hope that is the case with all of us.

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER XXVI

### AFTER ALL

WHEN Douglas Stewart had read Mr. Perkins' telegram he handed it to Miss Chiltern ; who, having also read it, asked :—

“Do you think it's a hoax?”

“I should say certainly not. He can be the only person who knows I advised his return, and you see he expressly mentions it.”

“I told you to advise him.”

“Exactly ; and I told him you told me so.”

“He has been very quick in doing as you advised him.”

“Wasn't that what you wanted?”

“Since he only came, one might say, for ten minutes, it seems a greater pity than ever that he ever came at all.”

“I am entirely of your opinion.”

“Really, Mr. Stewart, I don't know why you should think so,”

The young lady looked at the young gentleman with something in her eyes which—was new to him.

## The Romance of a

Her father looked up from the telegram which he had been reading in his turn, as he transferred it to Mr. Cloudesley.

"Then all I can say is, Diana, that I'm sorry for you. You must be purblind. Mr. Stewart expresses very mildly what ninety-nine men out of a hundred would express with all the force at their command. It is much more than a pity that that person of whom we were speaking ever came at all; it is a monstrous scandal; it comes within an ace of being a monstrous crime. The only consolation I have is that I cannot conceive it as being credible that he behaved in this irresponsible and undignified fashion merely on account of an exceedingly foolish young woman."

"Thank you, dad."

"None of your airs with me, Diana. Your action in this has been from first to last most unbecoming. It grieves me to learn that my daughter is capable of conduct which does so little credit to herself and me."

"Aren't you forgetting that we're not alone?"

"No, I'm not. The case is rendered much worse by the fact that, so far as I can gather, you are entirely responsible for having placed Mr. Stewart in a position not only of serious inconvenience, but of positive danger. The blame for the dreadful tragedy of which—of which—eh—"

"Miss Moore."

This cue came from the lady with a smile, and in a whisper.

"Miss Moore"—he glared at his daughter as he availed himself of her assistance—"has been the victim lies at your door; but I repeat that from first to last your behaviour has been all—or nearly all—that it

## Maid of Honour

ought not to have been, which is truly a painful confession for a father to have to make. I owe you many thanks, Mr. Stewart, speaking for my misguided child—”

“Don’t say misguided, dad, even though I am a child.”

“Speaking for my misguided child, and I—I—I may almost say for my country, for having induced this—this person to return whence he came.”

“It was my advice first of all.”

“Possibly; but you are by no means gratified to find that, owing to Mr. Stewart’s insistence, it has been acted upon.”

“You are not entitled to say that, dad.”

“I am entitled, and I do say it. I can only trust, Mr. Stewart, that this will be a lesson not to allow yourself to be again entangled in any mess and muddle in which a feather-headed and thoughtless girl chooses to get herself. Now, Diana, you will be so good as to come away with me at once. We have already trespassed too long on Mr. Stewart’s hospitality.”

“Good-bye, Mr. Stewart.”

The lady moved to him and held out her hand. He took it and kept it in his, and she allowed him to keep it; but he said nothing. As he looked at her, and saw in her eyes many things which he fancied were there for him to see, he wondered within himself if, after all, this was not a person he was meeting for the first time, and—he understood.

“You have heard,” she told him, “what my father has said with eloquence which is beyond me altogether. But I do hope it wasn’t necessary for him to warn you against feather-headed girls! No one knows better

## The Romance of a

than he does how dangerous they really are. Thanks for what you have done for me. I hope it hasn't been very much bother. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Miss Chiltern."

That was the last time he ever spoke to the Lady of the Sands, or she to him. He has never seen her since. She got, with her father, into the hansom which had brought Mr. Cloudesley and which was still waiting at the door; and drove away. From the doorstep Mr. Stewart watched her going, till the hansom had passed round the corner. Then he returned to Mr. Cloudesley, who received him with what he took to be an air of furtive amusement; which, however, may have existed only in the young man's imagination. It was Mr. Cloudesley who spoke first.

"So that episode's ended."

"What episode?"

Stewart glanced up quickly; as if he scented something to resent.

"Shall we call it 'The Adventure of Mr. Perkins'? I suppose we may take it that this is from him?"

He alluded to the telegram, which he yet had in his hand.

"You may. Kindly give that telegram to me."

"Well, I was thinking that it might be desirable that I should give it to them at the office, to be kept for reference, in case."

"In case of what?"

"In case of anything?"

"That telegram is mine. It has nothing to do with you, or with what you call 'the office'. If you please."

Mr. Cloudesley seemed, for a second, to hesitate; then he gave the young man the slip of pink paper.

## Maid of Honour

"You will not destroy it?—you will keep it, lest it should be required for any purpose?"

"I will not destroy it." Going to the window he drew the other's attention to a man who was lounging on the opposite side of the road, a short, stout man, with a scrubby black beard, and his hat crammed down over his eyes. "You see that fellow? I'll wager that he's a friend of that scoundrel on the 'bus; another emissary from the society. They've been taking a great deal of interest to-day in Walham Green."

"You think so. It can soon be proved. I can have him arrested before he knows what's threatening him. My friends are close at hand."

"Your friends? Do you mean the police?"

"A contingent of them is within hailing distance; shall I show you?"

"What would be gained? The thing most to be desired, I take it, by all the parties concerned, is that scandal should be avoided, that it should not become generally known that there ever was a Mr. Perkins—so long as he continues safe. I fancy that the presence of that gentleman across the road proves that not only has nothing unpleasant happened to him up till now, but also that nothing unpleasant is likely to happen. If that gentleman's friends knew that he is on his way home I don't think he would be there. He is there in the sure and certain faith that presently Mr. Perkins will return to Brenda Villas. So far as I am concerned he can be there as long as he pleases; the longer he is there the farther off Mr. Perkins will be. No, I don't think I should trouble him with your friends the police; at any rate, till later, and then, don't let the trouble have anything to do with Mr. Perkins."

## The Romance of a

Mr. Cloudesley smiled.

"There's something in what you say, Mr. Stewart, I'll make a note of it. I fancy that Miss Chiltern knew what she was about when she placed her trust in you."

"You think so?" The young man turned from the window. "I'm afraid that I have some work which I must do, if you'll excuse me."

However, when the other had gone, and he was alone, he did not show much alacrity to work as his words might have suggested. His attention was caught by the various garments which he had bought for Mr. Perkins, their presence was still one of the most prominent features of the room. "I've half a mind to call in that fellow from across the road, and ask if they'd be any use to him, or to his friends; only he might smell a rat, and that wouldn't do. Perhaps if I were to return them to the tailor he might allow me something for them, since they've never been worn." Then unlocking a wooden desk, which stood on a side table, he took from it an envelope, in which was a sheet of paper, and a sprig of rosemary. He put the sprig of rosemary between the folds of the telegram; the telegram in the sheet of paper; the sheet of paper into the envelope; and replaced the envelope in the desk, saying, as he turned the key, "that's for remembrance".

# Maid of Honour

## CHAPTER XXVII

### TWO VISITORS

THE following morning Douglas Stewart was at work when Mrs. Driver announced that a gentleman wished to see him, and the Hon. Arthur Chiltern was shown in. It was Stewart's custom, when writing at home, to wear his oldest clothes. He was wearing them then. When he stood up the contrast between him and his handsome, debonair, resplendent visitor was a little striking.

"Good morning, Mr. Stewart. I hope I am not interrupting you."

"I was at work."

"I'll only keep you a moment or two, but the truth is that, though I'm not a person who observes the proprieties so closely as I might do, for the credit of the family I felt that I had to call." He held out his hand; it seemed that for an instant Stewart hesitated, then he took it. "Have you a sister, Mr. Stewart?"

"So far as I am aware I have not a living relative in the world."

"Ah, that's a position which is not without its ad-



## The Romance of a

vantages. I've a multitude of relations, and it sometimes seems to me that more than a fair share of them are alive. As you know, I've a sister, and, between ourselves, I'm occasionally thankful that I've only one, she's sufficient for one brother." He paused, but as the other continued silent he went laughingly on. "It's not altogether her fault; my mother died when she was a baby, and since then she's been brought up in fragments, on a variety of systems, but not on any one of them long. The result is that she's what she is; with a genius for getting into scrapes which is positively unequalled. She's been getting into scrapes her whole life long, and now I understand she's been getting into another, and dragged you with her."

"I hope that you haven't come here to apologise for Miss Chiltern."

"I don't know about apologise, I don't know that that's the exact word; but suppose you'd a sister, and she got me into a hole, you'd be sorry."

"I suppose I should, but Miss Chiltern hasn't got me into a hole."

"It's very good of you to say so, and it's lucky for her—and for me!—that you're a rattling good sort. Thank you, Stewart, very much. But tell me, frankly, has—Mr. Perkins cost you anything abnormal? because I assure you that I don't intend to allow you to stand that."

"But he hasn't. Let me tell you how I look at it. It isn't everybody who gets the chance of entertaining such a guest. I've heard that plenty of people would pay anything to get it. Now I'll be frank with you. You know in your rooms that night I won at bridge, for me, quite a heap of money. Entertaining Mr. Per-

## Maid of Honour

kins didn't cost me anything like what I won, nothing like it. So you see, in every way, I score."

"I am very glad to hear it, and that that's the way in which you look at it. Di's a very fortunate young woman. By the way, she gave me a note for you. I don't know what's in it, or if it requires an answer; but if you'll look it over, and it does, if you like I'll take it."

Douglas Stewart opened the envelope which the speaker gave him. This was the note which it contained:

"DEAR MR. STEWART,

"Somebody has been scolding me about something ever since I saw you yesterday. If I could only make you understand what I've gone through you'd be sorry for me; I'm frightfully sorry for myself. I could almost cry when I think of how sorry I am. And now my brother tells me that he is going to tell you that he disowns me—his only sister! But I tell him that I don't believe you'll think I'm the sort of creature he's going to say I am. You don't! do you?

"We did have a good time at Thorpe, didn't we? And it was rather a joke about Mr. Perkins, wasn't it? Only please don't drop the least hint to anyone that I said so, or I'll be slain.

"Poor Bill Perkins!

"It was sweet of you to be so nice, and I do hope you won't think that I've been perfectly horrid. Because, dear Mr. Stewart, deep down at the bottom of my heart, I always shall remember what a true friend you were to

"Yours most awfully penitently,

"DI CHILTERN."

## The Romance of a

"*P.S.* I am not sure that I am really penitent.

"Oh, just to show how anxious everyone is to be rid of me I've had to own that I'm engaged to be married—to George Barton. It's going to be as soon as ever they can make it. Aren't you sorry for him?"

Douglas Stewart looked up at his visitor with rather an odd expression on his face, as if he were in the enjoyment of a capital joke.

"Miss Chiltern tells me that she is engaged to be married."

"The young imp has been engaged for ever so long, under the rose; and I've been her confidant, more shame to me. And now—well, I'll be candid with you, now that my father has set his heart on another match altogether, she chooses this moment to make public announcement of the fact."

"Will you tell her, please, that I congratulate her very heartily?"

As he spoke, Mr. Stewart looked Mr. Chiltern straight in the face, still smiling. When he was again alone, taking down his old peerage he searched its pages for the name of Barton—George Barton. He found that Mr. George Barton was the nephew and next heir of the Earl of Dundee. Everybody knows that the Earl of Dundee is a very old, and a very rich, and a very great man; so that it did not seem that Miss Chiltern was going to do so very badly for herself, though she might have disappointed her father.

After lunch he had a second visitor, the man Wodeski; than whom none could have been more unexpected. He was in the room before Stewart clearly realised who it was who wished to see him, or

## Maid of Honour

it is possible that he would not have been allowed to get beyond the front door. At sight of him the younger man stood up with what was perhaps an air of unconscious repugnance. His words were sufficiently to the point.

"What do you mean by coming here, you—inde-scribable scoundrel?"

Mr. Wodeski showed no sign of being moved. He had not troubled to take off his rusty top hat; but, with it still upon his head, peered about the room with his hungry eyes, and that something in his bearing which was so unpleasantly reminiscent of a beast of prey.

"You are very snug in here," he observed, when one began to wonder if he proposed to take a complete mental catalogue of the entire contents, "very snug. It is a good trade, writing—for fools—eh? But you earn your money. Which is not the case with every-one. Some day we will alter all that; only wait a little longer."

"Did you hear me ask you what you mean by coming here?"

Mr. Wodeski rubbed his bristly chin with a dirty hand, as if the action assisted some obscure mental process.

"What do I mean by coming here? that is the question. Yes, now I remember. It was about a person whose name began—was it not with P? not so? Ah, what a person! how droll, how gay, how light-hearted; so little on his mind, and so little in his head. You have been very clever; it does not necessarily follow because one is so young that one is an idiot."

## The Romance of a

"Nor because one is so old that one is a decent member of society."

"No! a decent member of society? It is impossible, it is a contradiction in terms!"

"You have not yet told me what is the cause of your intrusion."

"You are not glad to see me, no? Yet we are members of the same fraternity, I also write; there are some strange people whose trade—more or less—is writing. But I will not stay long, oh brother scribe. I reach the point in my own way; always in my own way. As to the person whose name began—was it with P? There were persons who had sworn to kill him if he stayed in London until to-day; persons who do not swear that kind of thing unless they meant it. They waited for him all the night, expecting him to return to be killed; but you are so clever. He had given them the slip. All through the night they wait in vain; he never returns at all. To them it was a serious blow. These poor persons! Their disappointment—it was tragic!"

"Do you know, Mr. Wodeski, that I'm disposed to hand you over to the next policeman?"

"Why to the next—why not to the next but one? Do not confine yourself to a particular policeman. Do you think I care if you what you call hand me over to policemen in London? You are not such a fool. Now I come to what has induced me to favour you with this little visit. It was proposed to inform a certain lady that the person whose name began with P had been to London, and you know what brought him here."

"Don't ask me questions."

"I ask you no questions; I make a statement of

## Maid of Honour

fact ; I say you know what brought him here, and you do know, and I know also, only I knew first. If a certain lady were acquainted with that little romance, there would be a pleasant excitement in—in the upper circles, much greater excitement than perhaps you may imagine, which might have various and far-reaching consequences—believe me. But you need have no fear. Europe will remain asleep, the lady in question will be allowed to continue in that state of ignorance which is bliss ; the proposal to inform her is off. The person whose name began with P will offer her the explanation of his movements which he finds most convenient ; it is sure to be a pretty tale. It will be endorsed by those who are in a position to endorse it ; not a doubt will be cast upon any of the details—those dangerous details. Not a breath of scandal will be allowed to get into the air ; it will be quite all right. I thought it possible that you might like to be assured upon this delicate point ; therefore I am come. What I say is absolutely to be relied upon ; always, at all times.”

# The Romance of a

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### "I WONDER"

"How thin my hand has got!"

Douglas Stewart, who took it between his and kept it there, thought it had. The whole of the lady to whom the hand belonged had grown thin, so thin that, as Mr. Stewart himself told her, there was hardly anything of her left; but, he added, what was left was not without value, which at least was something because on a valuable foundation one could always build.

The season was past, August was nearly ended, the autumn had come; only now was the lady really coming back into the world—at last. It seemed so long ago since that day upon the omnibus, that eventful day in the history of Brenda Villas. Neither of them had ever spoken of it since or of the doings which had made it momentous, or of the people who had figured in them. By common yet silent consent they seemed to have agreed together to forget that they had ever been. The old life had returned, and the former relations, only they had grown closer together. The man had worked and the maiden had dreamed while

## Maid of Honour

she was winning back to life, and while he worked sometimes the man dreamed of the maid, until the time came when he told her of his dreams, and she whispered to him of hers. And then it seemed that each of them had dreamed of the same thing since—oh, since a long, long time ago.

When she ceased to spend the day in bed, and the doctor came no more, the maid gained weight at a rate which amazed her, and amused the man. And in September they were married. The book was finished. A publisher whom it pleased and who thought it might perhaps please a few someone-elses, had behaved, in a pecuniary sense, not badly. And the man had other work, and there were prospects, but, of course, they would be quite poor—until their ship came home, but they believed it was on the sea. So poor that their honeymoon only lasted a week, and was spent in a place which one is reluctant to name, it is so unromantic, but the air was good for the lady.

Nothing could have been more quiet than their wedding. There was no announcement in any of the papers. The bride's mother and the verger, who gave the bride away, were the only persons who were with them in the church, besides the parson. And yet some little bird must have been whispering somewhere, some entirely unknown, unseen, unsuspected little bird. Because, when they returned from their honeymoon of a week's duration, they found two packages awaiting them. One was a bulky affair, sealed with many seals, addressed to "Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Stewart". In it they found, first a large panel photograph of a very young man, set in a quaint and striking frame, which was much more valuable than either of them



## The Romance of a

guessed. On the mount, in the corner, was written in a boyish sprawling hand :—

"To D. S.  
"From his friend.  
BILL PERKINS."

In the same package was a second enclosure, for "Mrs. Douglas Stewart". When the lady opened it she discovered a flat leather case and within it a necklace of big shining stones. She looked up at her liege with startled wondering eyes.

"Are they diamonds?"

He had the necklace in his hand.

"I should say they are certainly diamonds, and splendid diamonds too. Madam, you're an heiress. Look at that."

He directed her attention to a scrap of paper which was attached to the necklace, and on which was written, in the same sprawling, boyish hand.

"To Mrs. Douglas Stewart,  
"A Wedding Present  
"from one who owes to her his life  
and who prays for her happiness."

The other parcel was a much smaller one, and was addressed to the lady. It was a diamond brooch, shaped to resemble a sprig of rosemary. On the back was engraved, "That's for remembrance.—D.B." The lady's face, as she beheld this second wonder, was a study.

"D.B.? Douglas, what does it mean? Who is D. B.?"

## Maid of Honour

"You remember my speaking to you once of a Miss Chiltern?" The lady nodded; a sudden little light came into her eyes. "I saw some weeks ago that she had married a Mr. George Barton. I noticed in yesterday's paper that the Earl of Dundee is dead. As Mr. Barton is his nephew, and his heir, I presume that, to-day, his wife is the Countess of Dundee."

The lady was examining the brooch, and the superscription.

"But—I never saw her in my life. I wonder—why she has sent me this."



# Curtis Yorke's Latest Novels

## THE WORLD AND DELIA

Library Edition, 6/-  
Ready Jan. 1907

## THE GIRL AND THE MAN

Library Edition, 6/-  
Recently published

*The Times*.—"Curtis Yorke, in her many novels, has a happy gift for portraying the tender emotions. There is always a charm about Curtis Yorke's books—partly because she has the gift of natural sympathetic dialogue."

## IRRESPONSIBLE KITTY

Library Edition, 6/-

*Morning Post*.—"Whether grave or gay, the author is a *raconteur* whose imagination and vivacity are unfailing. Few, moreover, have in the same degree the versatility which enables her to provoke peals of laughter and move almost to tears. The writer is natural, realistic and entertaining."

## ALIX OF THE GLEN

Library Edition, 6/-

*Saturday Review*.—"The novels of Curtis Yorke are too well known to need introduction. They have already their own public. They are bright, lively and vivacious."

## OLIVE KINSELLA

Library Edition, 6/-

*Daily News*.—"Curtis Yorke is undoubtedly a clever novelist. She possesses a light and delicate touch, a simple style, and no small amount of human sympathy. She is at her best when writing of love and love's troubles."

## DELPHINE

Library Edition, 6/-  
Popular Edition, 6d.

*Academy*.—"With imagination, a vivid sense of character, a power of writing passionate love-scenes without in the least degree overstepping the bounds of good taste, and the gift of weaving a coherent story, there should be a future of success before this writer, out of the beaten track of mere conventional story-telling."

## THE GIRL IN GREY

Library Edition, 6/-  
Popular Edition, 6d., shortly

*Yorkshire Post*.—"In the novels of Curtis Yorke there is an abiding charm."

## A FLIRTATION WITH TRUTH

New  
Library Edition, 2/6

*Manchester Courier*.—"Curtis Yorke's work has been marked from the first with singular insight into poor human nature, with tolerance towards the ugly and inevitable ills that spoil this beautiful world, and with literary ability of a high order."

London: JOHN LONG, 13 and 14 Norris St., Haymarket  
And in JOHN LONG'S COLONIAL LIBRARY



# A Catalogue of the Books Published by Mr. John Long



**13 & 14 Norris Street  
Haymarket, London**

***February, 1907***

**Telegrams and Cables: "Longing, London"**

**Telephone: No. 9313 Central**



February, 1907

## FICTION

AMITY, JOHN.

**An Island Interlude.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

ANONYMOUS, NOVELS BY.

**Merciless Love.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**For a God Dishonoured.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Curse of Eden.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Master Sinner.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**The Desired Haven.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. With Frontispiece.

**When it was Light.** A Reply to "When it was Dark." Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

Also Popular Edition. Crown 8vo., paper cover, sewed, 1s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo. See p. 35.

APPLETON, G. W., NOVELS BY.

**The Rook's Nest.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Mysterious Miss Cass.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Silent Passenger.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Duchess of Pontifex Square.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Ingenious Captain Cobbs.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Girl and the Gadfly.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [Shortly.]

BARR, AMELIA E.

**The Belle of Bowling Green.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

BARRETT, FRANK.

**The Night of Reckoning.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

BAYLISS, HELEN, NOVELS BY.

**A Woman in the City.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Slaves of Passion.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Woman at Bay.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

BEAMAN, EMERIC HULME.

**The Experiment of Dr. Nevill.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London



**BERKLEY, EIBBON.****Oswald Steele.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**BETHAM-EDWARDS, Miss.****Martha Rose, Teacher.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**BINDLOSS, HAROLD, NOVELS BY.****The League of the Leopard.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**His Master Purpose.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**Alton of Somasco.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**The Cattle Baron's Daughter.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**The Dust of Conflict.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**Delilah of the Snows.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.[*Shortly.*]**BLOUNDELLE-BURTON, JOHN.****Traitor and True.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**BLYTH, JAMES, NOVELS BY.****Amazement.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.[*Shortly.*]**BODKIN, M. McDONNELL, NOVELS BY.****In the Days of Goldsmith.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**A Madcap Marriage.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**BOOTHBY, GUY, NOVELS BY.****In Spite of the Czar.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s. With 8 Illustrations by LEONARD LINSDELL.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. Illustrated. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**The Lady of the Island.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s. With 8 Illustrations by A. TALBOT SMITH.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. With 8 Illustrations by A. TALBOT SMITH. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**A Cabinet Secret.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s. With 8 Illustrations by A. WALLIS MILLS.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. With 8 Illustrations by the same Artist. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**A Bride from the Sea.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s. With 8 Illustrations by A. TALBOT SMITH.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. With 8 Illustrations by A. Talbot Smith. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

BRADLEY, J. FOVARGUE.

**The Passing of Night.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [Shortly.]

BRICE, SHIRLEY.

**The Might of a Wrong-doer.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

BREWER, DANIEL DOUGLAS.

**A Full-length Portrait of Eve.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [Shortly.]

BRUCE, ROBERT.

**Benbonuna.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

BUCHANAN, ROBERT.

**Father Anthony.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. With 16 Illustrations by SIDNEY COWELL.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. With 16 Illustrations by SIDNEY COWELL. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

BURGIN, G. B., NOVELS BY.

**The Bread of Tears.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Wilful Woman.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Way Out.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Son of Mammon.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Shutters of Silence.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

BURRARD, W. DUTTON.

**A Weaver of Runes.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

CAMERON, MRS. LOVETT, NOVELS BY.

**A Difficult Matter.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Passing Fancy.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**Bitter Fruit.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**An Ill Wind.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**A Woman's No.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

CAMERON, MRS. LOVETT, NOVELS BY—(*Continued*).

**Midsummer Madness.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**The Craze of Christina.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**A Fair Fraud.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Remembrance.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Rosamond Grant.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 34.

## CAPES, BERNARD.

**The Mill of Silence.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## CARREL, FREDERIC, NOVELS BY.

**The Progress of Pauline Kessler.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**Paul le Maistre.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Realization of Justus Moran.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Houses of Ignorance.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Marcus and Faustina.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## CHATTERTON, G. G., NOVELS BY.

**The Angel of Chance.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Court of Destiny.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Straight Shoes.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Gate of Never.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Sport of Circumstance.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**The Dictionary of Fools.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## CLARE, AUSTIN.

**The Little Gate of Tears.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## CLEEVE, LUCAS, NOVELS BY.

**Eileen.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Indiscretion of Gladys.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**His Italian Wife.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**The Purple of the Orient.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Plato's Handmaiden.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

CLEEVE, LUCAS, NOVELS BY—(*Continued*).

**Yolande the Parisienne.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Real Christian.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Lady Sylvia.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Mademoiselle Nellie.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**St. Elizabeth of London.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**Soul-Twilight.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Billy's Wife.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Love and the King.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Selma.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Her Father's Soul.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*]

## COBBAN, JAMES McLAREN, NOVELS BY.

**The Iron Hand.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Terror by Night.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**An African Treasure.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**I'd Crowns Resign.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Green Turbans.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Soldier and a Gentleman.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Pursued by the Law.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## COLLINS, WILKIE.

**The Woman in White.** Large Crown 8vo., cloth, gilt, 2s. net; leather, gold-blocked, and silk marker, 3s. net.; classic half-vellum, 5s. net. All editions contain Photogravure Portrait of the Author, and 16 Illustrations by A. TALBOT SMITH. *Library of Modern Classics.* See p. 35.

## COMPTON, JAMES.

**The Hospital Secret.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## COMSTOCK, SETH COOK, NOVELS BY.

**Monsieur le Capitaine Douay.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Rebel Prince.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. With Photogravure Frontispiece by HAROLD COPPING.

## COOK, ALEC.

**The Parish Doctor.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## COOKE, J. Y. F.

**Stories of Strange Women.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## COOPER, EDWARD H.

**George and Son.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

---

18 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**COWDEN, ARTHUR.**

**The Horse and the Maid.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**CROMMELIN, MAY, NOVELS BY.**

**Kinsah.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. Frontispiece by A. SAUBER.

**The Luck of a Lowland Laddie.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Woman-Derelict.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Daughter of England.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Bettina.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**One Pretty Maid and Others.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Crimson Lilies.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Partners Three.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**The White Lady.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Phoebe of the White Farm.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The House of Howe.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**CROSLAND, T. W. H.**

**The Suburbans.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s.

Also Popular Edition. Crown 8vo., paper cover, sewed, 1s.

**CROUCH, A. P.**

**A Wife from the Forbidden Land.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [*Shortly.*]

**CROSS, VICTORIA.**

**Anna Lombard.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. (44th Edition).

**DAVENANT, PHILIP, NOVELS BY.**

**Cicely Vaughan.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Wise in his Generation.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**DAVIDSON, L. CAMPBELL.**

**Second-Lieutenant Celia.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. Illustrated.

**DAVIS, ELLIS J.**

**His Little Bill of Sale.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**DAWSON, CHARLES.**

**A Minister of Fate.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**DELAIRE, JEAN, NOVELS BY.**

**Around a Distant Star.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. Illustrated.

**A Dream of Fame.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

---

18 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**KEIGHTLEY, S. R., NOVELS BY.**

**Barnaby's Bridal.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Beggar on Horseback.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**KERNAHAN, MRS. COULSON, NOVELS BY.**

**Trewinnot of Guy's.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**Devastation.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Avenging of Ruthanna.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**No Vindication.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**An Unwise Virgin.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Fate of Felix.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Frank Redland, Recruit.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Sinnings of Seraphine.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Mystery of Magdalen.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*]

**KINGSLEY, CHARLES.**

**Westward Ho!** Large crown 8vo., cloth gilt, 2s. net; leather, gold-blocked, and silk marker, 3s. net; half-bound classic vellum, 5s. net. All Editions contain Photogravure Portrait of the Author, and 16 Illustrations by HAROLD COPPING.

*Library of Modern Classics.* See p. 35.

**LANGFIELD, JOHN.**

**A Light-Hearted Rebellion.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**LEES, ROBERT JAMES, NOVELS BY.**

**The Car of Phœbus.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Heretic.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Life Elysian.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**LE QUEUX, WILLIAM, NOVELS BY.**

**The Mask.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Eye of Istar.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., paper, 6d.  
See p. 34

**The Veiled Man.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., paper, 6d.  
See p. 34.

**LEWIS, HELEN PROTHERO, NOVELS BY.**

**Thraldom.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Unguarded Taper.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

---

18 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**MACHRAY, ROBERT.**

**The Ambassador's Glove.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**MACPHERSON, JOHN F.**

**A Yankee Napoleon.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*]

**MACQUOID, KATHERINE S., NOVELS BY.**

**A Ward of the King.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Story of Lois.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**MAGNAY, SIR WILLIAM, BART.**

**The Duke's Dilemma.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**MCLEOD, TORQUIL.**

**The Dame of the Fine Green Kirtle.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**MCPHERSON, JEAN.**

**Didums.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**MALLANDAINE, CATHERINE E.**

**The Cavern of Laments.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. With 8 Illustrations  
by A. TALBOT SMITH.

**MANN, MARY E.**

**In Summer Shade.**

Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**MARKHAM, PAUL.**

**By Jumna's Banks.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**MARSH, RICHARD, NOVELS BY.**

**Ada Vernham, Actress.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Curios : Some Strange Adventures of Two Bachelors.** Crown 8vo.,  
cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Mrs. Musgrave and Her Husband.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Miss Arnott's Marriage.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

---

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

**GUBBINS, NATHANIEL, NOVELS BY.**

**Pick Me Ups.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**Dead Certainties.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also illustrated boards, 2s.

**All the Winners.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also illustrated boards, 2s.

**Told in "Tatta."** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also illustrated boards, 2s.

**First Favourites.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also illustrated boards, 2s.

**HAGGARD, LIEUT.-COLONEL ANDREW, NOVELS BY.**

**A Canadian Girl.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Bond of Sympathy.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Persian Rose Leaf.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**HALCOMBE, C. J. H.**

**The Love of a Former Life.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**HANNAN, CHARLES.**

**Castle Oriol.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**HARRISON, MRS. DARENT.**

**The Stain on the Shield.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**HEKKING, AVIS.**

**In Search of Jehanne.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[Shortly.]

**HEPPENSTALL, R. H.**

**The Malice of Grace Wentworth.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**HINDLE, DACRE.**

**Links of Love.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**HINKSON, H. A.**

**When Love is Kind.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**HOWARD, ISABEL.**

**Wounded Pride.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**HOWARD, KEBLE.**

**Letters to Dolly.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. (with 82 Illustrations by Tom Browne, R.I.).

---

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**



## HUGHES, THOMAS.

**Tom Brown's Schooldays.** Large crown 8vo., cloth gilt, 2s. net; leather, gold-blocked, and silk marker, 3s. net; classic half vellum, 5s. net. All Editions contain Photogravure Portrait of the Author and 16 Illustrations by A. TALBOT SMITH.

*Library of Modern Classics.* See p. 35.

## HUME, FERGUS, NOVELS BY.

**The Silent House in Pimlico.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Crimson Cryptogram.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Bishop's Secret.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**The Jade Eye.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Turnpike House.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**A Traitor in London.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Golden Wang-Ho.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Woman the Sphinx.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Secret Passage.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**The Lonely Church.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Opal Serpent.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**The Silver Bullet.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Black Patch.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Sacred Herb.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*In preparation.*

## INGOLD, JOHN.

**Glimpses from Wonderland.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. Illustrated.

## JACK, THE CONNAUGHT RANGER.

**Flashes from Cape Diamonds.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**FRASER, MRS. HUGH.**

**The Stolen Emperor.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**GARNETT, WILLIAM TERRELL.**

**The Fooling of Don Jaime.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**GERARD, DOROTHEA.**

**Itinerant Daughters.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*]

**GERARD, MORICE.**

**Dr. Manton.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*]

**GIBB, MRS. HUGHES, NOVELS BY.**

**The Soul of a Villain.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Through the Rain.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**GILBERT, GEORGE, NOVELS BY.**

**In the Shadow of the Purple.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. An entirely  
New Edition reset, with new matter and a rare and beautiful  
portrait of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

[*Shortly.*]

**The Bâton Sinister.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Island of Sorrow.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**GISSING, ALGERNON.**

**The Master of Pinsmead.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**GLANVILLE, ERNEST.**

**A Beautiful Rebel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**GOLDÄCKER, BARONESS VON.**

**A Butterfly.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**GOULD, NAT, NOVELS BY.**

Cr. 8vo., illustrated boards, 2s. each ; or in cloth gilt, 2s. 6d. each. 288 pp.

**One of a Mob.**

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**A Bit of a Rogue.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**The Selling Plater.**

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**The Lady Trainer.**

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

---

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

GOULD, NAT, NOVELS BY—(*Continued*).**A Straight Goer.****A Hundred to One Chance.****A Sporting Squatter.****Charger and Chaser.**[*Shortly.*]**The Chance of a Lifetime.**[*Shortly.*]**A New Novel.**[*Shortly.*]**The Pet of the Public** (Nat Gould's Annual, 1906). Medium 8vo., 1s. 160 pages. Sewed.*N.B.—All Mr. Nat Gould's New Stories are exclusively published by John Long.*

## GOWING, MRS. AYLMEYER, NOVELS BY.

**As Cæsar's Wife.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**A King's Desire.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**By Thames and Tiber.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**Lord of Himself.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## GRAHAM, WINIFRED.

**A Social Pretender.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## GRANT, SADI.

**The Second Evil.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## GRAY, MAXWELL, Author of "The Silence of Dean Maitland."

**The Great Refusal.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.[*In preparation.*]

## "G. G." (H. G. HARPER), NOVELS BY.

**The Chaser's Luck.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also illustrated boards, 2s.

**A Fairy in the Pigskin.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

Also illustrated boards, 2s.

## GRIFFITH, GEORGE, NOVELS BY.

**A Criminal Cæsus.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**The World Masters.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

## GRIFFITHS, MAJOR ARTHUR.

**A Woman of Business.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## GROOT, J. MORGAN DE.

**A Man of Iron.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

---

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

**DICKBERRY, F.**

**The Storm of London.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also Popular Edition. Crown 8vo., paper cover, sewed, 1s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**DICKENS, CHARLES.**

**A Tale of Two Cities.** Large Crown 8vo., cloth, gilt, 2s. net; leather, gold-blocked, and silk marker, 3s. net; classic half-vellum, 5s. net. All editions contain Photogravure Portrait of the Author, and 16 Illustrations by FRANK CHESWORTH. *Library of Modern Classics.* See p. 35.

**DIEHL, ALICE M., NOVELS BY.**

**Entrapped.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Love and Liars.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Temptation of Anthony.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Love—with Variations.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The End of a Passion.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[Shortly]

**DILL, BESSIE.**

**The Lords of Life.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**DIXIE, LADY FLORENCE.**

**Izra.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**DODGE, WALTER PHELPS.**

**The Sea of Love.** Long 12mo., cloth, 1s. 6d.

**DONOVAN, DICK, NOVELS BY.**

**The Scarlet Seal.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**The Crime of the Century.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[Shortly]

**DOTHIE, W. P.**

**Paul, the Optimist.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**DOUGLAS-HAMILTON, MRS. ALFRED (The late).** Edited by her Daughter, LADY DUNBAR OF MOCHRUM.

**Leone: A Tale of the Jesuits.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**DOYLE, MINA.**

**On Parole.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**DUDENEY, MRS. HENRY.**

**Men of Marlowe's.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**DUNTZE, LADY.**

**Infelix.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**ELIOT, GEORGE.**

**Adam Bede.** Large crown 8vo., cloth, gilt, 2s. net; leather, gold-blocked, and silk marker, 3s. net; half-bound classic half-vellum, 5s. net. With Photogravure Portrait of the Author, and 16 Illustrations by P. B. HICKLING. *Library of Modern Classics.* See p. 35.

**ELKINGTON, E. WAY.**

**The Two Forces.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**ESLER, Mrs. E. RENTOUL.**

**Youth at the Prow.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**FENN, GEORGE MANVILLE, NOVELS BY.**

**Blind Policy.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Aynsley's Case.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**FLETCHER, J. S., NOVELS BY.**

**The Arcadians.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. Illustrated.

**The Harvesters.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Investigators.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Golden Spur.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Three Days' Terror.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 34.

**FORBES, LADY HELEN, NOVELS BY.**

**The Provincials.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Lady Marion and the Plutocrat.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**FORSTER, R. H., NOVELS BY.**

**The Last Foray.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**In Steel and Leather.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Strained Allegiance.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Arrow of the North.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Mistress of Aydon.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. Illustrated.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [Shortly.]

**FOWLER, HARRY.**

**With Bought Swords.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**MARSH, RICHARD, NOVELS BY—(Continued).**

**The Magnetic Girl.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Confessions of a Young Lady.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Garden of Mystery.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Under One Flag.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Romance of a Maid of Honour.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Woman Perfected.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [Shortly.]

**MARTIN, MRS. CHARLES.**

**Miss Pouncefort's Peril.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**MATHERS, HELEN, NOVELS BY.**

**A Man of To-day.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d.  
See p. 34.

**The Sin of Hagar.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d.  
See p. 34.

**The Juggler and the Soul.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo.,  
paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**MATHEW, FRANK.**

**The Royal Sisters.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**MEADE, L. T., NOVELS BY.**

**The Burden of Her Youth.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Confessions of a Court Milliner.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Wooing of Monica.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo.,  
paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Nurse Charlotte.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**His Mascot.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Little Wife Hester.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Med. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**The Adventures of Miranda.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Face of Juliet.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Heart of Helen.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**From the Hand of the Hunter.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Kindred Spirits.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[Shortly.]

**The Curse of the Ferals.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[Shortly.]

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**METHLEY, ALICE, NOVELS BY.****The Identity of Jane.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**La Belle Dame.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**MIDDLEMASS, JEAN, NOVELS BY.****Count Reminy.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**A Veneered Scamp.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**MITFORD, BERTRAM.****A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.*[Shortly.]***MITFORD, C. GUISE.****Izelle of the Dunes.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**MUDDOCK, J. E., NOVELS BY.****Sweet "Doll" of Haddon Hall.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Fair Rosalind.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**A Woman's Checkmate.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**In the Red Dawn.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**From the Clutch of the Sea.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**Jane Shore.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. Frontispiece.**For the White Cockade.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**The Alluring Flame.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**MURPHY, NICHOLAS P., NOVELS BY.****A Corner in Ballybeg.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.**Transplanted.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. With Illustrations.**MURRAY, DAVID CHRISTIE.****A Penniless Millionaire.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**The Brangwyn Mystery.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.*[Shortly.]***NIGHTINGALE, HELEN M.****Savile Gilchrist, M.D.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**O'BRIEN, MRS. WILLIAM.****Under Croagh Patrick.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**QUIDA.****Le Selve.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

---

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

**PAIN, BARRY.***Wilhelmina in London.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.Also Popular Edition. Crown 8vo., paper cover, sewed, 1s. [*Shortly.*]**PATERNOSTER, G. SIDNEY.***Children of Earth.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s*The Folly of the Wise.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.*A New Novel.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [*Shortly.*]**PERKINS, ROSE.***The House of Hardale.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**PHELPS, SYDNEY.***His 'Prentice Hand.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**PHILLIMORE, MRS. C. E.***Two Women and a Maharajah.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**PICKERING, PERCIVAL.***Toy Gods.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**PINKERTON, THOMAS A., NOVELS BY.***Blue Bonnets Up.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.*The Ivory Bride.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.*Valdora.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [*Shortly.*]**PLATTS, W. CARTER, NOVELS BY.***Papa, Limited.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. With 40 Illustrations by the AUTHOR.*Up to To-morrow.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. With 70 Illustrations by the AUTHOR.**POE, EDGAR ALLAN.***Tales of Mystery and Imagination.* Decorative cover, 3d. net; artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net, leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.**POOL, MARIA LOUISE.***Friendship and Folly.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.**PRAED, MRS. CAMPBELL, NOVELS BY.***Dwellers by the River.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.*Fugitive Anne.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

*The Other Mrs. Jacobs.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 35.

*The Maid of the River.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

*The Luck of the Leura.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

---

18 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London



**PRYCE, DAISY HUGH.**

**Deyncourt of Deyncourt.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**PUGH, EDWIN.**

**The Fruit of the Vine.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**RANGER-GULL, C.**

**The Harvest of Love.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*]

**READE, CHARLES.**

**The Cloister and the Hearth.** Large crown 8vo., cloth gilt, 2s. net ; leather, gold-blocked, and silk marker, 3s. net ; classic half vellum, 5s. net. All Editions contain Photogravure Portrait of the Author and 16 Illustrations by MAURICE LALAU.

*Library of Modern Classics.* See p. 35.

**REARDON, RICHARD.**

**The Crowning of Gloria.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**REAY, MARCUS, NOVELS BY.**

**The Love Affairs of a Curate.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**Forbidden Paths.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**REYNOLDS, MRS. FRED.**

**The Book of Angelus Drayton.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**RITA, NOVELS BY.**

**The Sin of Jasper Standish.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**A Jilt's Journal.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**ROBERTS, MORLEY.**

**The Shadow of Allah.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**ROBINSON, F. W.**

**All They went Through.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**RODD, RALPH.**

**A Fighter in Khaki.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**RODER, GEORGE.**

**George Savile.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**RORISON, E. S.**

**A Taste of Quality.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

---

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

**ST. AUBYN, ALAN.**

**The Greenstone.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*]

**SANDEMAN, MINA, NOVELS BY.**

**Wicked Rosamond.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Charming Miss Kyrle.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Veronica Verdant.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**SERGEANT, ADELINE, NOVELS BY.**

**The Mission of Margaret.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Future of Phyllis.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Beneath the Veil.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Waters of Oblivion.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Malincourt Keep.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Choice of Emelia.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**An Independent Maiden.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The House in the Crescent.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**SHEPPARD, W. J.**

**The Tenderfoot.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**SNOWDEN, KEIGHLEY.**

**Barbara West.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**SOMERS, SUZANNE.**

**A Serpent in His Way.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**SPEIGHT, T. W., NOVELS BY.**

**The Crime in the Wood.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**Juggling Fortune.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**STANTON, CORALIE, AND HEATH HOSKEN.**

**All That a Man Hath.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Second Best.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*]

**STUART, ESMÉ, NOVELS BY.**

**Sent to Coventry.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**In the Dark.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Strength of Straw.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Nobler than Revenge.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

---

18 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**TAYLER, JENNER.**

**Mary Bray X her Mark.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**THACKERAY, W. M.**

**The History of Henry Esmond.** Large crown 8vo., cloth, gilt, 2s. net; leather, gold-blocked, and silk marker, 3s. net; half-bound classic vellum, 5s. net. All editions contain Photogravure Portrait of the Author, and sixteen Illustrations by P. B. HICKLING.  
*Library of Modern Classics.* See p. 35.

**THOMAS, ANNIE.**

**The Diva.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**THORNE, GUY, Author of "When it was Dark."**

**A Lost Cause.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also Popular Edition. Crown 8vo., paper cover, sewed, 1s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., 6d. See p. 35.

**THYNNE, ROBERT, NOVELS BY.**

**Boffin's Find.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. Frontispiece.

**Irish Holidays.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Story of a Campaign Estate.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**TROLLOPE, ANTHONY.**

**The Three Clerks.** Large crown 8vo., cloth gilt, 2s. net; leather, gold-blocked, and silk marker, 3s. net; classic half-vellum, 5s. net. All editions contain Photogravure Portrait of the Author, and sixteen Illustrations by P. B. HICKLING.

*Library of Modern Classics.* See p. 35.

**TUITE, HUGH.**

**The Heart of the Vicar.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**TURNER, EDGAR.**

**The Girl with Feet of Clay.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. Frontispiece.

**TWEEDALE, VIOLET, NOVELS BY.**

**The Kingdom of Mammon.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

[*New Edition.*

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Hazards of Life.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Lord Eversleigh's Sins.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Lady Sarah's Son.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Portals of Love.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Sweets of Office.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[*Shortly.*

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

## TYTLER, SARAH, NOVELS BY.

*The Machinations of Janet.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels, Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

*Logan's Loyalty.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*Jean Keir of Craigneil.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*Women must Weep.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*The Courtship of Sarah.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*A Daughter of the Manse.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*Four Red Roses.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*His Reverence the Rector.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*The Bracebridges.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*Hearts are Trumps.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*The Girls of Inverbarna.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*Innocent Masqueraders.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*A New Novel.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[Shortly.]

*Miss Nanse.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

## VALLINGS, HAROLD.

*Paulette D'Esterre.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## WALES, HUBERT.

*Mr. and Mrs. Villiers.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*The Yoke.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*A New Novel.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

[Shortly.]

## WALKER, W. S. ("COO-EE"), NOVELS BY.

*When the Mopoke Calls.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. With 22 Illustrations.

*From the Land of the Wombat.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. With 13 Illustrations.

*Virgin Gold.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. With 16 Illustrations.

*In the Blood.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. With 16 Illustrations.

*Native Born.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

*Zealandia's Guerdon.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

## WARDEN, FLORENCE, NOVELS BY.

*Once too Often.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels, Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

*The Mystery of Fourways.* Crown 8vo., paper cover, sewed, 1s.

*Something in the City.* Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**WARDEN, FLORENCE, NOVELS BY—(Continued).**

**An Outsider's Year.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Lovely Mrs. Pemberton.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**No. 3, The Square.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Face in the Flashlight.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**An Impossible Husband.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in the Haymarket Novels. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. See p. 36.

**Who was Lady Thurne?** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Our Widow.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Mystery of Dudley Horne.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**Kitty's Engagement.** Long's Sixpenny Novels. Medium 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 34.

**The Real Mrs. Daybrook.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Man with the Amber Eyes.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [Shortly.]

**WARDEN, GERTRUDE.**

**The Millionaire and the Lady.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**WHISHAW, FRED, NOVELS BY.**

**The Diamond of Evil.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Countess Ida.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Informer.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Her Highness.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A Fool with Women.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**A New Novel.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [Shortly.]

**WINGFIELD, GEORGE.**

**He that is without Sin.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**WINTER, JOHN STRANGE, NOVELS BY.**

**Sly Boots.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**Love and Twenty.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**The Countess of Mountenoy.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

Also in Long's Sixpenny Novels. Med. 8vo., paper, 6d. See p. 35.

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

## POETRY AND DRAMA

ALEXANDER, LOUIS C.

**The Testament of Omar Khayyám.** Comprising his Testament (or Last Words), A Song, Hymn of Prayer, The Word in the Desert, Hymn of Praise, also Odes of the Disciples. Royal 16mo., 2s. 6d. net.

BEDWELL, HUGH.

**Life's Little Comedies.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

BRUCE, ROBERT.

**Re-echoes from Coondambo.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 5s. net.

BURNS, ROBERT.

**Songs.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

BYRON, LORD.

**Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.** Decorative cover, 3d. net; artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

CHILDE-PEMBERTON, HARRIET L.

**Her Own Enemy.** A Play. Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

**Love Knows and Waits, and other Poems.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

COLERIDGE, S. T.

**Christabel, and other Poems.** Decorative cover, 3d. net; artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

FORSTER, R. H.

**Idylls of the North.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

**In Old Northumbria.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. net. Illustrated.

HOOD, THOMAS.

**Humorous Poems.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

JACKSON, G. HUNT.

**The Demon of the Wind, and other Poems.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

LINGSTON, ROWE.

**The Coming of Spring, and other Poems.** Ryl. 16mo., 2s. 6d. net.

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

**MOORE, DUGALD, M.B.**

**Nightshade and Poppies.** Verses of a Country Doctor. Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

**O'DONNELL, F. HUGH.**

**The Message of the Masters.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

**POPE, ALEXANDER.**

**The Dunciad, and other Poems.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**ROGERS, ARUNDEL.**

**Mamamouchi.** A Comedy in Three Acts. (Adapted from the French.) Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

**ROSSETTI, DANTE GABRIEL.**

**The Blessed Damsel, and other Poems.** Decorative cover, 3d. net; artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM.**

**Much Ado about Nothing.** Decorative cover, 3d. net; artistic cloth, gold-blocked, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**Sonnets and Poems.** Decorative cover, 3d. net; artistic cloth, gold-blocked, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**SHORT, FRANK.**

**The Boer Ride.** Crown 8vo., paper cover, 6d. net.

**SOUTH, ROBERT.**

**The Divine Aretino, and other Plays.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 7s. 6d. net.

**Sir Walter Raleigh.** A Drama. Crown 8vo., cloth, gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

**SPENSER, EDMUND.**

**Sonnets and Poems.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**TOWNSHEND, MARCHIONESS.**

**In the King's Garden, and other Poems.** Beautifully printed on hand-made paper and sumptuously bound, with the latest autograph portrait of the Marchioness in Photogravure, printed on India paper. Royal 16mo., 5s. net.

---

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

## SMITH, BARTHOLOMEW.

**Chamberlain and Chamberlainism.** His Fiscal Proposals and Colonial Policy. Paper cover, sewed, 1s. net.

## SPENCER, EDWARD.

**The King's Race-Horses.** A History of the connection of His Majesty King Edward VII. with the National Sport. With Additional Notes by Lord MARCUS BERESFORD. Printed on hand-made paper, with twenty plates in photogravure, limited to 300 copies. Royal 4to., £3 3s. net.

\* \* Also a Special Edition, Imperial 4to., on Japanese Vellum, limited to 50 copies, the Plates on India Paper, one hand-coloured with a duplicate set of Plates in handsome Portfolio for framing. Each copy numbered and signed by the Author, £10 10s. net.

## SOUTHEY, ROBERT.

**The Life of Nelson.** Decorative cover, 3d. net; cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt and gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net, 320 pp. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

## SCHOLES, THEOPHILUS E. SAMUEL, M.D.

**Glimpses of the Ages.** Or, The "Superior" and "Inferior" Races, so-called, discussed in the Light of Science and History. Demy 8vo., cloth, 12s. net.

In this work the aim of the author has been to show that in the three great divisions of mankind there exists an absolute equality. The kinds of equality considered are physical and mental. The volume deals exhaustively with the much-discussed question of the equality of the coloured races with that of the white, and the author introduces much information of an absorbing nature to prove that the so-called "superiority" of the whites over the coloured races is an untenable theory.

## STERNE, LAURENCE.

**A Sentimental Journey.** Decorative cover, 3d. net; artistic cloth, gold-blocked, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

## SWIFT, DEAN.

**A Voyage to Lilliput.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d.; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

## TEMPLE, RIGHT HON. SIR RICHARD, BART., G.C.S.I.

**The House of Commons.** Crown 8vo., cloth, gilt, 3s. 6d.

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London



**THACKERAY, W. M.**

**The Four Georges.** Decorative cover, 3d. net ; artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net ; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**English Humorists of the 18th Century.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net ; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**TWAIN, MARK.**

**The Jumping Frog, and other Sketches.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net ; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**WARD, ARTEMUS.**

**His Book.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net ; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

**WHYTEHEAD, ROBT. YATES, M.A.**

**Records of an Old Vicarage.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**WILKINSON, FRANK.**

**Australia at the Front.** A Colonial View of the Great Boer War. With Portrait, Map, and 20 Illustrations on art paper by NORMAN H. HARDY from Sketches on the spot, and Photos by the AUTHOR. Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**WILLIAMS, MRS. M. FORREST.**

**How to take Care of a Consumptive.** Fcap. 8vo., paper cover, 1s. net.

**CARLYLE, THOMAS.**

**On Heroes and Hero Worship.** Decorative cover, 3d. net; artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. 320 pp. *Carlton Classics*. See p. 33.

**CLEMENT, HUGH.**

**In Heaven's Porch.** Long 12mo., artistic paper cover, 6d.

**COCHRANE, JAMES HENRY, M.A.**

**The Unconquerable Colony.** Some Episodes of Ulster in the Seventeenth Century. Crown 8vo., cloth, gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

**DALGLEISH, FLORENCE.**

**Daily Pickings from Pickwick.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

**DE QUINCEY, THOMAS.**

**The Confessions of an Opium Eater.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics*. See p. 33.

**ELSON, GEORGE.**

**The Last of the Climbing Boys.** With a Preface by the Dean of Hereford. Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**FELBERMAN, LOUIS.**

**The Land of the Khedive.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. With numerous Illustrations.

**GALLOWAY, WILLIAM JOHNSON.**

**The Operatic Problem.** Fcap. 4to., 1s. net.

\* \* \* A short account of the systems under which Opera is conducted on the Continent, with a scheme for the establishment of a system of National Opera in this country.

**GEAREY, CAROLINE.**

**Rural Life: its Humour and Pathos.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s.

**"G. G." (H. G. HARPER).**

**Horses I have Known.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

**GREIN, J. T.**

**Dramatic Criticism (1899).** Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

**GRIFFITH, GEORGE.**

**Sidelights on Convict Life.** Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. With numerous Illustrations from Photographs.

---

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

## GENERAL LITERATURE

ADDISON, JOSEPH.

**Essays (Selected).** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

ANONYMOUS.

**The Confessions of a Princess.** Cr. 8vo., cloth, 6s. [*Fifth Edition.*Also Popular Edition. Cr. 8vo., paper cover, sewed, 1s. [*Shortly.***Letters of Junius.** Artistic cloth, gilt, 6d. net; leather, gilt top, gold-blocked back and side, 1s. net. *Carlton Classics.* See p. 33.

A. O. D.

**Cricket, Drill, and Training.** Cloth, 1s. With numerous Illustrations and Diagrams.

ARMSTRONG, MRS. L. HEATON.

**Etiquette and Entertaining.** Long 12mo., rounded edges, cloth, 1s.

BARING-GOULD, S.

**A Book of the Cevennes.** With Map and upwards of 60 Illustrations. Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. [*In preparation.*

\* \* This book is uniform in scope and size with Mr. Baring-Gould's well-known books on Brittany, The Riviera, Devon, Cornwall, Dartmoor, etc.

BARTON, FRANK TOWNEND, M.R.C.V.S.

**Terriers: Their Points and Management.** With upwards of 40 Illustrations from photographs on art paper. Crown 8vo., cloth heavily gilt, 5s. net.

BRENTFORDE, GEORGE G.

**Prince and Tom.** Some Incidents in the Life of a Dog and a Cat, as narrated by Prince the Terrier. With 8 Illustrations by C. DUDLEY TENNANT. Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

CAIRNES, CAPTAIN W. E.

**Social Life in the British Army.** Dedicated by Special Permission to Field-Marshal LORD WOLSELEY, K.P., etc. Crown 8vo., cloth, 6s. With 16 full-page Illustrations on art paper by R. CATON WOODVILLE. [*Third Edition.*

---

13 & 14 Norris Street, Haymarket, London

"Will outbid all rivals."—*Bookman*.

"Certainly wonderful."—*Athenaeum*.

## JOHN LONG'S CARLTON CLASSICS

Prices: Decorative Cover, 3s. net.; Artistic Cloth, gilt, 6s. net.; Leather, gilt top, gold blocked back and side, 12s. net. Length from 160 to 320 pages. Newly set in very clear, special, new type, and printed on the best paper. It is the aim of this Series to present in tasteful and artistic form the World's favourite little masterpieces in prose and verse, and the Publisher believes that these Classics will be considered new and distinctive, and surpass any series at present before the public in the beauty of their printing and the daintiness of their format. Each Volume contains a Biographical Introduction by the Editor, MR. HANNAFORD BENNETT. *The first twelve only are bound in decorative paper covers.*

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. THE FOUR GEORGES . . . . .                       | W. M. THACKERAY   |
| 2. CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE . . . . .             | LORD BYRON        |
| 3. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING . . . . .                 | SHAKESPEARE       |
| 4. WARREN HASTINGS . . . . .                        | LORD MACAULAY     |
| 5. THE LIFE OF NELSON . . . . .                     | ROBERT SOUTHY     |
| 6. TALES (Selected) . . . . .                       | EDGAR ALLAN POE   |
| 7. CHRISTABEL, and Other Poems . . . . .            | S. T. COLERIDGE   |
| 8. A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY . . . . .                  | LAURENCE STERNE   |
| 9. THE BLESSED DAMOZEL, and Other Poems . . . . .   | DANTE G. ROSSETTI |
| 10. ON HEROES AND HERO WORSHIP . . . . .            | THOMAS CARLYLE    |
| 11. SONNETS AND POEMS . . . . .                     | SHAKESPEARE       |
| 12. RASSELAS . . . . .                              | SAMUEL JOHNSON    |
| 13. SONNETS AND POEMS . . . . .                     | EDMUND SPENSER    |
| 14. ESSAYS (Selected) . . . . .                     | JOSEPH ADDISON    |
| 15. HIS BOOK . . . . .                              | ARTEMUS WARD      |
| 16. THE DUNCIAD, and Other Poems . . . . .          | ALEXANDER POPE    |
| 17. ENGLISH HUMORISTS OF THE 18th CENTURY . . . . . | W. M. THACKERAY   |
| 18. THE JUMPING FROG, and Other Sketches . . . . .  | MARK TWAIN        |
| 19. SONGS . . . . .                                 | ROBERT BURNS      |
| 20. ESSAYS (Selected) . . . . .                     | LEIGH HUNT        |
| 21. LETTERS OF JUNIUS . . . . .                     | ANONYMOUS         |
| 22. HUMOROUS POEMS . . . . .                        | THOMAS HOOD       |
| 23. CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER . . . . . | THOMAS DE QUINCEY |
| 24. A VOYAGE TO LILLIPUT . . . . .                  | DEAN SWIFT        |

Other Volumes to follow.

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

## John Long's Famous Sixpenny Copyright Novels

In Striking Picture Covers, 8½ in. by 5½ in.

### THE FOLLOWING ARE NOW READY

AN OUTSIDER'S YEAR . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
SOMETHING IN THE CITY . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
THE LOVELY MRS. PEMBERTON . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
THE MYSTERY OF DUDLEY HORNE . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
KITTY'S ENGAGEMENT . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
OUR WIDOW . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
No. 3, THE SQUARE . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
THE JADE EYE . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
THE TURNPIKE HOUSE . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
THE GOLDEN WANG-HO . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
THE SILENT HOUSE IN PIMLICO . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
THE CRIMSON CRYPTOGRAM . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
A TRAITOR IN SPHONX . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
WOMAN—THE SPHINX . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
A WOMAN'S "NO" . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
THE CRAZE OF CHRISTINA . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
A PASSING FANCY . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
BITTER FRUIT . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
AN ILL WIND . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
MIDSUMMER MADNESS . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
CURIOS . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
MRS. MUSGRAVE AND HER HUSBAND . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
ADA VERNHAM, ACTRESS . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
THE MAGNETIC GIRL . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
MISS ARNOTT'S MARRIAGE . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
THE EYE OF ISTAR . . . . .	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
THE VEILED MAN . . . . .	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
THE MASK . . . . .	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
A MAN OF TO-DAY . . . . .	HELEN MATHERS
THE SIN OF HAGAR . . . . .	HELEN MATHERS
THE JUGGLER AND THE SOUL . . . . .	HELEN MATHERS
FATHER ANTHONY . . . . .	ROBERT BUCHANAN
THE WOOING OF MONICA . . . . .	L. T. MEADE
THE BURDEN OF HER YOUTH . . . . .	L. T. MEADE
THE SIN OF JASPER STANDISH . . . . .	RITA
A JILT'S JOURNAL . . . . .	RITA
A CABINET SECRET . . . . .	GUY BOOTHBY
THE LADY OF THE ISLAND . . . . .	GUY BOOTHBY
THE FUTURE OF PHYLLIS . . . . .	ADELINE SERGEANT
BENEATH THE VEIL . . . . .	ADELINE SERGEANT
A BEAUTIFUL REBEL . . . . .	ERNEST GLANVILLE
THE PROGRESS OF PAULINE KESSLER . . . . .	FREDERIC CARREL
THE WORLD MASTERS . . . . .	GEORGE GRIFFITH
IN SUMMER SHADE . . . . .	MARY E. MANN
LE SELVE . . . . .	OUIDA
SWEET "DOLL" OF HADDON HALL . . . . .	J. E. MUDDOCK
GEORGE AND SON . . . . .	EDWARD H. COOPER
THE SCARLET SEAL . . . . .	DICK DONOVAN
THE THREE DAYS' TERROR . . . . .	J. S. FLETCHER

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London


**JOHN LONG'S FAMOUS SIXPENNY NOVELS—(Cont.)**

In Striking Picture Covers, 8½ in. by 5½ in.

DELPHINE . . . . .	CURTIS YORKE
THE COUNTESS OF MOUNTENOY . . . . .	JOHN STRANGE WINTER
ONE OF A MOB . . . . .	NAT GOULD
THE SELLING PLATER . . . . .	NAT GOULD
THE FLUTE OF PAN . . . . .	JOHN OLIVER HOBBS
THE OTHER MRS. JACOBS . . . . .	MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED
THE STOLEN EMPEROR . . . . .	MRS. HUGH FRASER
THE KINGDOM OF MAMMON . . . . .	VIOLET TWEEDALE

*New Volumes for 1907*

A BRIDE FROM THE SEA . . . . .	GUY BOOTHBY
A BIT OF A ROGUE . . . . .	NAT GOULD
WHEN IT WAS LIGHT . . . . .	BY A WELL-KNOWN AUTHOR
IN SPITE OF THE CZAR . . . . .	GUY BOOTHBY
FUGITIVE ANNE . . . . .	MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED
THE GIRL IN GREY . . . . .	CURTIS YORKE
HIS ITALIAN WIFE . . . . .	LUCAS CLEEVE
THE NIGHT OF RECKONING . . . . .	FRANK BARRETT
THE SECRET PASSAGE . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
THE STORM OF LONDON . . . . .	F. DICKBERRY
THE LADY TRAINER . . . . .	NAT GOULD
A LOST CAUSE . . . . .	GUY THORNE

 Other Novels by the most popular Authors of the day will be added to the Series from time to time.

"A real triumph of modern publishing."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

**JOHN LONG'S LIBRARY OF MODERN CLASSICS**

A series of great works of fiction by modern authors. Not pocket editions, but large, handsome, and fully illustrated volumes for the bookshelf, printed in large type on the best paper. Biographical Introductions and Photogravure Portraits. Size, 8 in. by 5½ in.; thickness, 1½ in. Prices: Cloth Gilt, 2s. net each; Leather, Gold Blocked and Silk Marker, 3s. net each; or in Classic Half-Vellum, 5s. net each.

THE THREE CLERKS . . . . .	(480 pp.) ANTHONY TROLLOPE
THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH . . . . .	(672 pp.) CHARLES READE
THE WOMAN IN WHITE . . . . .	(576 pp.) WILKIE COLLINS
ADAM BEDE . . . . .	(480 pp.) GEORGE ELIOT
THE HISTORY OF HENRY ESOMOND . . . . .	(432 pp.) W. M. THACKERAY
WESTWARD HO! . . . . .	(600 pp.) CHARLES KINGSLEY
TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS . . . . .	(320 pp.) THOMAS HUGHES
A TALE OF TWO CITIES . . . . .	(384 pp.) CHARLES DICKENS

*Other Volumes to follow.*

"I know of no pleasanter or more tasteful reprints."—*Academy*. "A marvel of cheapness."—*Spectator*. "A marvellous bargain."—*Truth*. "Wonderfully cheap."—*Globe*. "Remarkable in price and format."—*Daily Mail*. "Admirable in print, paper, and binding."—*Saturday Review*.

**13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London**

## THE HAYMARKET NOVELS

A Series of Copyright Novels by Popular Authors. The volumes are printed upon a superior Antique Wove Paper, handsomely bound in specially designed cover, red cloth, heavily Gold-Blocked at back. The size of the volumes is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  in. by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in. by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in., the length from 300 to 350 pages, and the price 2s. 6d. each.

FATHER ANTHONY (Illustrated) . . . . .	ROBERT BUCHANAN
A CABINET SECRET (Illustrated) . . . . .	GUY BOOTHBY
AN OUTSIDER'S YEAR . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
FUGITIVE ANNE . . . . .	MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED
THE FUTURE OF PHYLLIS . . . . .	ADELINE SERGEANT
BENEATH THE VEIL . . . . .	ADELINE SERGEANT
THE SCARLET SEAL . . . . .	DICK DONOVAN
A PASSING FANCY . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
AN ILL WIND . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
MIDSUMMER MADNESS . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
THE SILENT HOUSE IN PIMLICO . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
THE CRIMSON CRYPTOGRAM . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
THE MACHINATIONS OF JANET . . . . .	SARAH TYTLER
THE MAGNETIC GIRL . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
THE BURDEN OF HER YOUTH . . . . .	L. T. MEADE
A FLIRTATION WITH TRUTH . . . . .	CURTIS YORKE
DELPHINE . . . . .	CURTIS YORKE
THE OTHER MRS. JACOBS . . . . .	MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED
A JILT'S JOURNAL . . . . .	RITA
THE INDISCRETION OF GLADYS . . . . .	LUCAS CLEEVE
PARTNERS THREE . . . . .	MAY CROMMELIN
ONCE TOO OFTEN . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
THE LADY OF THE ISLAND (Illus.) . . . . .	GUY BOOTHBY
THE WORLD MASTERS . . . . .	GEORGE GRIFFITH
HIS MASTER PURPOSE . . . . .	HAROLD BINDLOSS
TREWINNOT OF GUY'S . . . . .	MRS. COULSON KERNAHAN
MRS. MUSGRAVE AND HER HUSBAND . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY . . . . .	DICK DONOVAN
CURIOS . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
A BRIDE FROM THE SEA . . . . .	GUY BOOTHBY
ROSAMOND GRANT . . . . .	MRS. LOVETT CAMERON
THE JADE EYE . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
MISS ARNOTT'S MARRIAGE . . . . .	RICHARD MARSH
AN IMPOSSIBLE HUSBAND . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
THE GIRL IN GREY . . . . .	CURTIS YORKE
IN SPIE OF THE CZAR (Illus.) . . . . .	GUY BOOTHBY
ST. ELIZABETH OF LONDON . . . . .	LUCAS CLEEVE
THE OPAL SERPENT . . . . .	FERGUS HUME
THE MAID OF THE RIVER . . . . .	MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED
THE FACE IN THE FLASHLIGHT . . . . .	FLORENCE WARDEN
ALIX OF THE GLEN . . . . .	CURTIS YORKE
LITTLE WIFE HESTER . . . . .	L. T. MEADE

\*.\* Other Volumes to follow.

13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, London

# INDEX OF TITLES

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
Adam Bede . . . .	10, 35	Blue Bonnets Up . . . .	19	Confessions of a Young Lady	17
Ada Vernham, Actress	16, 34	Boer Ride, The . . . .	32	Corner in Ballybeg, A . . .	18
Adventures of Miranda, The	17	Boffin's Find . . . .	22	Countess Ida . . . .	24
African Treasure, An . . .	7	Bond of Sympathy, A . . .	13	Countess of Mountenoy	24, 34
Alf of the Glen . . . .	25, 26	Book of Angelus Drayton	20	Count Raminy . . . .	13
All that a Man Hath . . .	21	Bracebridges, The . . . .	23	Court of Destiny, The . . .	6
All the Winners . . . .	13	Brangwyn Mystery, The . .	18	Courtship of Sarah, The . .	23
All They went Through . .	20	Bread of Tears, The . . .	5	Crase of Christina, The . .	6, 34
Alluring Flame, The . . .	18	Bride from the Sea, A . .	4, 35, 36	Cricket, Drill and Training	26
Alton of Somasco . . . .	4	Burden of Her Youth	17, 34, 36	Crime in the Wood, The . .	21
Amusement . . . .	4	Butterfly, A . . . .	11	Crime of the Century, The	9, 36
Ambassador's Glove, The .	16	By Jumna's Banks . . . .	16	Criminal Croesus, A . . .	12
Angel of Chance, The . . .	6	By Thames and Tiber . . .	12	Crimson Cryptogram	14, 34, 36
Anna Lombard . . . .	8	Cabinet Secret, A . . . .	4, 34, 36	Crimson Lilies . . . .	8
Appearances . . . .	28	Canadian Girl, A . . . .	13	Crowning of Gloria, The . .	20
Arcadians, The . . . .	10	Car of Phœbus, The . . .	15	Curios . . . .	16, 34, 36
Around a Distant Star . .	8	Castle Oriol . . . .	13	Curse of Eden, The . . .	3
Arrow of the North, The .	10	Cattle Baron's Daughter, The	4	Curse of the Ferals, The .	17
As Cæsar's Wife . . . .	12	Cavern of Laments, The . .	16	Daily Pickings from Pickwick	37
Australia at the Front . .	30	Cevennes, A Book of the . .	26	Dame of the Fine Green	
Avengeing of Ruthanna, The	15	Chamberlain and Chamber-		Kirtle, The . . . .	16
Aynaley's Case . . . .	10	lainism . . . .	29	Dangerous Quest, A . . .	26
Barbara West . . . .	21	Charger and Chaser . . .	12	Daughter of England, A . .	8
Barnaby's Bridal . . . .	15	Charming Miss Kyrle . . .	21	Daughter of the Manse, A .	23
Bâton Sinister, The . . .	11	Chaser's Luck, The . . .	12	Dead Certainties . . . .	13
Beautiful Rebel, A . . .	11, 24	Child Harold's Pilgrimage		Delilah of the Snows . . .	4
Beggar on Horseback, A .	15		21, 33	Delphine . . . .	25, 35, 36
Belle of Bowling Green, The	8	Children of Earth . . . .	19	Demon of the Wind, The . .	31
Benbonuna . . . .	6	Choice of Emelia, The . .	21	Desired Haven, The . . .	3
Beneath the Veil . . . .	21, 34, 36	Christabel and other Poems		Devastation . . . .	15
Bettina . . . .	8		31, 33	Deyncourt of Deyncourt . .	20
Billy's Wife . . . .	7	Cicely Vaughan . . . .	8	Diamond of Evil, The . . .	24
Bishop's Secret, The . . .	14	Cloister and the Hearth	20, 35	Dictionary of Fools, The . .	6
Bit of a Rogue, A . . . .	11, 25	Coming of Spring, The . .	31	Didums . . . .	16
Bitter Fruit . . . .	5, 24	Confessions of a Court Milli-		Difficult Matter, A . . .	5
Black Patch, The . . . .	14	ner . . . .	17	Diva, The . . . .	23
Blessed Damozel and other		Confessions of an Opium-		Divine Aretino and Other	
Poems . . . .	22, 23	Eater . . . .	27, 33	Plays . . . .	23
Blind Policy . . . .	10	Confessions of a Princess, The	26	Dramatic Criticism (1899)	27



PAGE	PAGE	PAGE
Dream of Fame, A . . . 8	Future of Phyllis, The 21, 34, 36	How to Take Care of a Con-
Dr. Manton . . . 11	Garden of Mystery, The . 17	sumptive . . . . .
Duchess of Pontifex Square- 3	Gate of Never, The . . . 6	Humorous Poems (Hood) 3
Duke's Dilemma, The . . 16	George and Son . . . 7, 34	Hundred to One Chance, A
Dunciad and other Poems 32, 38	George Savile . . . . . 29	I'd Crowns Resign . . .
Dust of Conflict, The . . 4	Girl and the Gadfly, The . 3	Identity of Jane, The . .
Dwellers by the River . . 19	Girl and the Man, The . . 26	Idylls of the North . . .
Eileen . . . . . 6	Girl in Grey, The . . 25, 35, 36	Ill Wind, An . . . . . 4, 24
End of a Passion, The . . 9	Girl with Feet of Clay, The 23	Impossible Husband, An 24
Enemy in our Midst, The . 26	Girls of Inverbarn, The . 23	Independent Maiden, An .
English Humorists of the	Glimpses from Wonder-	Indiscretion of Gladys, The
Eighteenth Century . . 30, 33	land . . . . . 14	Infelix . . . . .
Entrapped . . . . . 9	Glimpses of the Ages . . 29	Informers, The . . . . .
Essays (Joseph Addison) 28, 33	Golden Spur, The . . . 10	Ingenious Capt. Cobbs . .
Essays (Leigh Hunt) . . 23, 33	Golden Wang-Ho, The 14, 34	In Heaven's Porch . . . .
Etiquette and Entertaining 26	Great Refusal, The . . . 12	Innocent Masqueraders . .
Experiment of Dr. Nevill . 3	Greenstone, The . . . . 21	In Old Northumbria . . .
Eye of Istar, The . . . 15, 34	Green Turbans, The . . . 28	In Search of Jehanne . . .
Face in the Flashlight- 24, 36	Happiness . . . . . 26	In Spite of the Czar . . 4, 34
Face of Juliet, The . . . 17	Harvesters . . . . . 10	In Steel and Leather . . .
Fair Fraud, A . . . . . 6	Harvest of Love, The . . 30	In Summer Shade . . . 16
Fair Rosalind . . . . . 18	Hazards of Life, The . . 22	In the Blood . . . . .
Fairy in the Pigskin, A . . 12	Heart of Helen, The . . 17	In the Dark . . . . .
Fate of Felix, The . . . 15	Heart of the Vicar, The . 22	In the Days of Goldsmith .
Father Anthony . . . 5, 34, 36	Hearts are Trumps . . . 23	In the King's Garden . . .
Fighter in Khaki, A . . . 30	Heretic, The . . . . . 15	In the Red Dawn . . . . .
First Favourites . . . . 12	Her Father's Soul . . . 7	In the Shadow of the Purple
Flashes from Cape Diamonds 14	Her Highness . . . . . 24	Investigators, The . . . .
Flirtation with Truth, A 25, 36	Her Own Enemy . . . 31	Irish Holidays . . . . .
Flute of Pan, The . . . . 35	Heroes and Hero Worship 27, 33	Iron Hand, The . . . . .
Folly of the Wise, The . . 19	He that is Without Sin . 24	Irresponsible Kitty . . . .
Fooling of Don Jaime, The 11, 36	His Book (Artemus Ward) 30, 33	Island Interlude, An . . .
Fool with Women, A . . . 34	His Italian Wife . . . 6, 35	Island of Sorrow, The . . .
For a God Dishonoured . . 3	His Little Bill of Sale . . 8	Itinerant Daughters . . . .
Forbidden Paths . . . . . 30	His Mascot . . . . . 17	Ivory Bride, The . . . . .
For Faith and Navarre . . 25	His Master Purpose . . 4, 34	Isalle of the Dunes . . . .
For the White Cockade . . 18	His 'Prentice Hand . . . 19	Isra . . . . .
Four Georges, The . . . 30, 33	His Reverence the Rector . 23	Jade Eye, The . . . 14, 34
Four Red Roses . . . . . 23	History of Henry Esmond 22, 35	Jane Shore . . . . .
Frank Redland, Recruit . . 15	History of the Temple, The 28	Jean Keir of Cragneil . . .
Friendship and Folly . . . 19	Horse and the Maid, The . 5	Jilt's Journal, A . . . 24, 34
From the Clutch of the Sea 18	Horses I Have Known . . 27	Juggler and the Soul, The 17, 24
From the Hand of the Hunter 17	Hospital Secret, The . . 7	Juggling Fortune . . . . . 2
From the Land of the Wom-	House in the Crescent, The 21	Jumping Frog and other
bat . . . . . 23	House of Commons, The . 29	Sketches, The . . . 24, 1
Fruit of the Vine, The . . 20	House of Hardale, The . 19	Kindred Spirits . . . . .
Fugitive Anne . . . 12, 35, 36	House of Howe, The . . 8	Kingdom of Mammon . 22, 1
Full-length Portrait of Eve, A 5	Houses of Ignorance . . 6	King's Desire, A . . . .

	PAGE
King's Racehorses, The	29
Kinsah	8
Kitty's Engagement	24, 34
A Belle Dame	18
Lady Marion and the Plutocrat	10
Lady of the Island, The	4, 34, 36
Lady Sarah's Son	23
Lady Sylvia	7
Lady Trainer, The	11, 36
Land of the Khedive, The	27
Last Foray, The	10
Last of the Climbing Boys	27
League of the Leopard, The	4
Leone	9
Le Selve	18, 34
Letters of Junius	26, 33
Letters to Dolly	13
Life Elysian, The	15
Life of Nelson, The	29, 33
Life's Little Comedies	31
Lifting the Veil	28
Light-hearted Rebellion, A	15
Links of Love	13
Little Gate of Tears, The	6
Little Wife Hester	17, 36
Logan's Loyalty	23
Lonely Church, The	14
Lord Everleigh's Sins	23
Lord of Himself	12
Lords of Life, The	9
Lost Cause, A	23, 36
Love Affairs of a Curate, The	29
Love and the King	7
Love Knows and Waits	31
Love and Liars	9
Love and Twenty	24
Love of a Former Life, The	13
Love with Variations	9
Lovely Mrs. Pemberton	24, 24
Luck of a Lowland Laddie	8
Luck of the Laura, The	19
Machinations of Janet	23, 36
Madcap Marriage, A	4
Mademoiselle Nellie	7
Magnetic Girl, The	17, 24, 36
Maid of the River, The	19, 36
Malice of Grace Wentworth	13

	PAGE
Malincourt Keep	21
Mamamouchi	33
Man of Iron, A	13
Man of To-day, A	17, 34
Man with the Amber Eyes	24
Marcus and Faustina	6
Martha Rose, Teacher	4
Mary Bray x her Mark	23
Mask, The	15, 34
Master of Pinsmead, The	11
Master Sinner, The	3
Matilda, Countess of Tuscany	28
Men of Marlowe's	10
Merciless Love	3
Merely a Negress	25
Message of the Masters, The	33
Midsummer Madness	6, 34, 36
Might of a Wrong-Doer, The	6
Millionaire and the Lady, The	24
Mill of Silence, The	6
Minister of Fate, A	8
Miss Arnot's Marriage	16, 34, 36
Mission of Margaret, The	21
Miss Nanse	23
Miss Pauncefort's Peril	17
Mistress of Aydon, The	10
Monsieur le Capitaine Douay	7
Mr. and Mrs. Villiers	23
Mrs. Musgrave and her Husband	16, 34, 36
Much Ado About Nothing	33, 33
Mysterious Miss Cass, The	3
Mystery of Dudley Horne	34, 34
Mystery of Fourways, The	23
Mystery of Magdalen, The	16
Native Born	23
Night of Reckoning, The	3, 36
Nightshade and Poppies	33
Nobler than Revenge	21
No. 3, The Square	24, 34
No Vindication	16
Nurse Charlotte	17
Olive Kinsella	25
Once too Often	23, 36
One of a Mob	11, 36
One Pretty Maid and Others	8
Only Betty	26
On Parole	9

	PAGE
On the War Path	23
Opal Serpent, The	14, 36
Operatic Problem, The	27
Oswald Steele	4
Other Mrs. Jacobs, The	19, 36, 36
Our Widow	24, 34
Outsider's Year, An	24, 34, 36
Papa, Limited	19
Parish Doctor, The	7
Partners Three	8, 36
Passing Fancy, A	5, 34, 36
Passing of Night, The	5
Paulette D'Esterre	23
Paul le Maistre	6
Paul the Optimist	9
Penniless Millionaire, A	18
Pernian Rose Leaf, A	13
Pet of the Public, The	12
Phoebe of the White Farm	8
Pick Me Up	13
Plato's Handmaiden	6
Portals of Love, The	23
Prince and Tom	26
Progress of Pauline Kesler, The	6, 34
Provincials, The	10
Purple of the Orient, The	6
Pursued by the Law	7
Rasselas	28, 33
Real Christian, The	7
Realization of Justus Moran	6
Real Mrs. Daybrook, The	24
Rebel Prince, The	7
Records of an Old Vicarage	30
Re-echoes from Coondambo	31
Referendum	28
Remembrance	6
Romance of a Maid of Honour, The	17
Ronald Lindsay	26
Rook's Nest, The	3
Rosemond Grant	6, 34
Royal Sisters, The	17
Rural Life	27
St. Elizabeth of London	7, 36
Sacred Herb, The	14
Savile Gilchrist, M.D.	18
Scarlet Seal, The	9, 34, 36

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
Sea of Love, The . . .	9	Stories of Strange Women .	7	Veiled Man, The . . .	
Second Best, The . . .	21	Story of a Campaign Estate	22	Veneered Scamp, A . . .	
Second Evil, The . . .	12	Story of Lois, The . . .	16	Veronica Verdant . . .	
Second-Lieutenant Cella .	8	Straight Goer, A . . .	12	Virgin Gold . . .	
Secret Passage, The . . .	14, 36	Straight Shoes . . .	6	Voyage to Lilliput, A .	
Selling Plaster, The . . .	11, 36	Strained Allegiance . .	10	Ward of the King, A .	
Selma . . .	7	Strength of Straw, The .	21	War of the Sexes, The .	
Sentimental Journey, A .	20, 33	Suburbans, The . . .	8	Warren Hastings . . .	
Sent to Coventry . . .	21	Sweet "Doll" of Haddon		Waters of Oblivion, The	
Serpent in His Way, A .	21	Hall . . .	13, 34	Way Out, The . . .	
Shadow of Allah, The . .	20	Sweets of Office, The . .	22	Weaver of Runes, A . .	
Shutters of Silence, The .	6	Tale of Two Cities, A . .	9, 35	Westward Ho! . . .	
Sidelights on Convict Life	27	Tales of Mystery and Imag-		When it was Light . .	
Silent House in Pimlico,		ination . . .	19, 33	When Love is Kind . .	
The . . .	14, 34, 36	Taste of Quality, A . . .	20	When the Mopoke Call-	
Silent Passenger, The . .	3	Temptation of Anthony, The	9	White Lady, The . . .	
Silver Bullet, The . . .	14	Tenderfoot, The . . .	21	Who was Lady Thurne?	
Sinnings of Seraphine, The	16	Terriers . . .	26	Wicked Rosamond . . .	
Sin of Hagar, The . . .	17, 34	Terror by Night, The . .	7	Wife from the Fortified	
Sin of Jasper Standish .	20, 34	Testament of Omar Khay-		Land, A . . .	
Sir Walter Raleigh . . .	33	yám, The . . .	31	Willful Woman, A . . .	
Slaves of Passion . . .	3	Thralldom . . .	15	Wilhelmina in London .	
Sly Boots . . .	24	Three Clerks, The . . .	22, 35	Wise in His Generation	
Social Life in the British		Three Days' Terror, The .	10, 34	With Bought Swords . .	
Army . . .	26	Through the Rain . . .	11	Woman at Bay, A . . .	
Social Pretender, A . . .	12	Told in "Tatts" . . .	13	Woman Derelict, A . . .	
Soldier and a Gentleman .	7	Tom Brown's Schooldays	14, 35	Woman in the City, A .	
Something in the City . .	23, 34	Toy Gods . . .	19	Woman in White, The .	17
Songs (Burns) . . .	31, 33	Traitor and True . . .	4	Woman of Business, A .	
Son of Mammon, A . . .	5	Traitor in London, A . .	14, 34	Woman Perfected, A . .	
Sonnets and Poems (Shake-		Transplanted . . .	19	Woman's Checkmate, A .	
speare) . . .	23, 33	Trewinnot of Guy's . . .	15, 36	Woman's No, A . . .	21
Sonnets and Poems (Spen-		Triumph of Jill, The . . .	25	Woman the Sphinx . . .	14, 2
ser) . . .	23, 33	Turnpike House, The . .	14, 34	Women Must Weep . . .	2
Soul of a Villain, The . .	11	Two Forces, The . . .	10	Wooling of Monica, The	17, 3
Soul-Twilight . . .	7	Two Women and a Maharajah	19	World and Della, The . .	2
Sporting Squatter, A . . .	12	Unconquerable Colony, The	27	World Masters, The . .	12, 34, 3
Sport of Circumstance, The	6	Under Croagh Patrick . .	18	Wounded Pride . . .	11
Stage Irishman of the		Under one Flag . . .	17	Yankee Napoleon, A . .	10
Pseudo-Celtic Drama, The	23	Unguarded Taper, The . .	15	Yoka, The . . .	2
Stain on the Shield, The .	13	Unwise Virgin, An . . .	15	Yolande the Parisienne .	
Stolen Emperor, The . . .	1, 35	Up to To-morrow . . .	19	Youth at the Prow . . .	10
Storm of London, The . .	9, 26	Valdora . . .	19	Zealandia's Guardian . .	2

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100





